



THE LATIMER SCHOLARSHIP

Olivia Fowell



Heidi Thibodeau Lambiris
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The Latimer Scholarship

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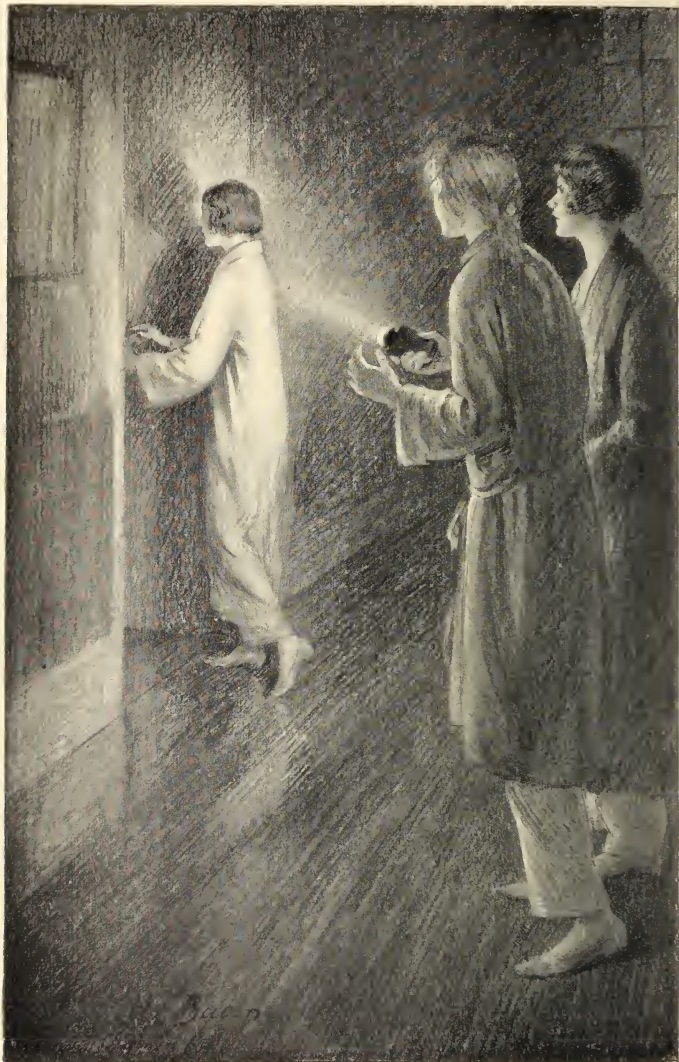
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“QUICK !”

Page 142

Frontispiece

The Latimer Scholarship

BY
OLIVIA FOWELL

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Railway Yarns. Thompson Cross.
Bertie, Bobbie and Belle. May Wynne.
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When Auntie Lil took Charge. May Wynne.
Mervyn, Jock or Joe. May Wynne.
Kitty Quick. L. E. Tiddeman.
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Queen of the Daffodils. Leslie Laing.
Terrie's Travels. Jennie Chappell.
Nuthbrown Roger and I. J. H. Yoxall.
A Rash Promise. C. S. Lowndes.

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CHAPTER I

A Prefects' Meeting

Lestholme prefects were in conclave in the head girl's study at Faraday. There were six of them, two for each of the three houses, Tredennings, Courtenays and Faraday; Malevers, the "Babies' Castle" was not represented, nor were the junior prefects.

Shirley Stainer, a rather pretty girl of about seventeen, with golden-brown hair which hung over one shoulder in a thick plait, and frank, wide-open brown eyes, the senior prefect of Tredennings, sat by the open window giving half her attention to the talk inside the room, and the other half to the beauty of the early summer evening. Lestholme *is* beautiful, everyone knows that, but knowing and feeling are two different things, and Shirley was one of those who felt deeply

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the beauty of the contrast between the old grey stone houses and the brilliant emerald of the turf over which the cedars were casting long black shadows—shadows that were fading as the sun sank lower and the dusk came on.

“ I don’t believe you’re paying a bit of attention, Shirley,” said Elizabeth Adair sharply. Elizabeth was the new head girl, and in her own eyes well suited to the post, for she was tall and dark and surveyed the world through a pair of pince-nez.

“ Sorry, but you’re under a misapprehension, madam,” laughed Shirley, turning round. “ You’re settling all about the hockey matches, and Monica knows more about it than I do, and Ruth is games captain, so I don’t barge in.”

“ Well, you might show a little interest,” Ruth Mason said, frowning at her list with a pencil poised in her hand. “ Why doesn’t your American do better at hockey?”

“ *My* American, indeed!” Shirley laughingly protested, turning her back resolutely on the world outside. “ Hockey isn’t her national game, I expect. You can’t expect her to have more than *one* speciality. Look here, Ruth, don’t bother Eve for big matches, will you? We want her to go in for the tennis tournament this year and she’ll have to practise hard, so I don’t

want her to get her wrist broken or anything of that sort."

"I think Eve had better play in some house matches, Shirley," said Elizabeth, "to keep her out of mischief."

"Well, I suppose in the long run it's Miss Marshall who will settle the weighty matter," Shirley replied, trying not to show the irritation she felt at Elizabeth's manner. After all, Eve was not a Faraday girl.

"By the way," interposed Barbara Bedale of Faraday, from the depths of a cushioned chair, "it's Eve's father we've got to thank for the Latimer scholarship, isn't it?"

"I wonder if she put it into her father's head or if he evolved it for himself," mused dark-eyed Tessa Maymon of Courtenays. "It must be rather exciting to have a millionaire for a father."

"Well, all I know is," said Ruth, feeling for her pencil first in one pocket of her jumper and then in the other, "that we could do with a few more scholarships knocking round—not that I should ever win anything myself. But it's a jolly good thing I came to Lestholme when I did, because—" she twisted round in her chair and felt down the seat—"What in creation have I done with my pencil!—because my father says the way things are going is simply ruin, and if there's

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a railway strike, or a coal strike again, the family's done for—oh, there it is!" Ruth looked as relieved by the discovery of her pencil under her chair as if it meant the salvation of the family fortunes.

"So if my little sister is to come here she'll have to try for the scholarship," she concluded cheerfully. "Thank goodness, she's got the brains of the family."

"I can't help thinking," said Barbie slowly, "that it's a bit hard on girls whose names have been down on the waiting list for ages, when someone else hops in and takes the vacant place by exam. There's my sister, Tommy, for instance—it's quite time she came."

Elizabeth nodded. "That's what my cousin, Adeleine Vestron, was saying this morning—oh, by the way, that reminds me, Shirley——"

"Yes," laughed Shirley, "I was going to tell you as soon as there was a pause in the flow of eloquence—we've got the scholarship girl at Tredennings."

"You haven't!" cried three voices in unison.

"We jolly well have," Shirley persisted. "She came yesterday, and her name is Olwen Lloyd-Evans, and she's Welsh, and she's shy, and I'm rather sorry for the kid."

"Welsh, is she?" Elizabeth said. "Perhaps that explains it. Adeleine said something about her yester-

day and I forgot till now. Adeleine thought her rather—well——”

Shirley grinned. “Exactly,” she said. “Just what Adeleine *would* think. The girl has been living in the country somewhere—I really don’t know where or why, and she’s got a weird sort of accent—and I believe she’s scared stiff.”

“Does she look frightfully brainy?” inquired Ruth, with interest.

“I’ve given up judging people by their looks,” laughed Shirley. “I’ve had so many shocks, but personally, I think she looks heavy.”

“Well, I wish you joy of her,” said Elizabeth, with a short laugh. She was always rather jealous of Shirley’s popularity and her success at Tredennings, and would not be at all sorry if the scholarship girl did not cover Tredennings with glory. “You always seem to have something out of the common in your House.”

“I assure you they’re thrust on me,” said Shirley placidly. “Anything outlandish in any way *does* seem to be dumped on us, I agree, but you’d be quite welcome to it as far as I’m concerned.”

“No, thanks,” laughed Elizabeth, and then suddenly awakened to a sense of her duties as hostess. “I say, I do apologize, you’ll have cocoa, won’t you, everybody?”

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Cocoa and cake had a softening effect. The talk drifted on to holiday matters and Elizabeth exerted herself to be agreeable.

“There’s something else I’ve got to mention,” she said at last. “Miss Travers told me to tell you all as a sort of preliminary notice. She wants to finish off the fund for the memorial window in the Chapel this term, so she thinks of having a fête, or fair, or garden party or mix-up of all three, at the end of the term.”

There was a chorus of groans.

“If that Mr. Latimer,” wailed Tessa, “had saved his money and given us the window instead of a scholarship!”

“That wouldn’t have been the same thing at all,” Shirley said quickly. “After all, if we *do* have a window in memory of famous Lestholme girls we don’t want an American to do it for us. Besides, he wanted to give something in memory of Eve’s mother, not people he didn’t care about.”

“The point is,” said Elizabeth — “do have some more cake, Monica—that we’re all to bear it in mind and see what we can do to help.”

“I don’t think Courtenays is much good,” Ruth said doubtfully. “We’re rather a sporting House, but we can’t very well organize a hockey match on the lawn for the benefit of visitors—think of Jobson’s

face if we did—and we don't seem to run to domestic virtues."

"I'm sure Faraday doesn't," the head girl laughed ruefully. "And I've such a lot of new girls that I hardly know what they're good for."

"And Tredennings is certainly out of it this time," Shirley said disconsolately. "We really haven't any parlour tricks, have we, Monica?"

"'Fraid not," replied Monica, shaking her head slowly.

"Well, you can't have everything," laughed Tessa, "you've got the scholarship girl! Besides, who knows, she may be able to do something spectacular for the fête."

Monica chuckled and glanced at Shirley. "They don't know her, do they, Shirley? Not that we do, either, for the matter of that, but anything that looked less like performing at a fête I have yet to meet!"

"All the same, I shall be surprised if you don't come romping in with some absolutely new stunt in the end," Elizabeth said with a slightly acid tone in her voice. "It wouldn't be you, Shirley, if you didn't find out something to bring Tredennings to the front."

"I haven't an idea what it's going to be then," laughed Shirley. "I promise you there's nothing up my sleeve this time."

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“ There’s plenty of opportunity yet,” said Elizabeth. “ Look here, if you’ve all finished, just put the cake and things anywhere out of the way and put these lists on the table and let’s go through them together.”

CHAPTER II

Dormitory B

Meanwhile the Latimer scholarship girl stood leaning disconsolately against the doorpost of Tredennings. Her great, dark, tragic eyes, the only beauty of her pale, thin face, were fixed wistfully on the darkening hills across the water and she was picturing the little Welsh village she had left a few days before, and the little cottage where she had lived with her mother's old nurse, Marget, ever since her mother's death five years ago.

It had seemed such a wonderful chance when Olwen had won the scholarship offered to the county by the American millionaire in memory of his wife, but tonight she was feeling as if she would willingly give it up to be back in the old familiar surroundings. She felt shy and awkward among all these laughing care-free girls whose life and upbringing had been so different from hers, and she was sure that they smiled at her Welsh accent and cast curious glances at her ill-cut clothes.

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The sound of hurrying footsteps brought her back to her present surroundings and she drew back hastily as Shirley entered hot-foot from the prefects' meeting.

"Hello!" exclaimed the head of the House, rather startled by the unexpected encounter. "What are you doing here all by yourself? Anything the matter?"

Olwen's eyes, dazzled by the sunset, met Shirley's and she blinked quickly and put her hand across them.

"I can't see anything but little green suns," she explained. "No, there is nothing the matter, indeed."

Shirley looked at her gravely. She was not at all sure that "little green suns" were all that Olwen had brushed away from her eyes.

"Where is everybody?" she asked. "You oughtn't to be mooning about by yourself, you know. And you ought not to be standing in this particular doorway either."

"Oughtn't I? I didn't know we weren't allowed to stand here."

"Well it isn't exactly a crime," laughed Shirley. "Only it's rather untidy! You'll find there are several unwritten laws, and there's always a good reason for them."

"Yes indeed," said Olwen, rather hopelessly. "It's a little difficult."

The curfew rang out from the School House as Shirley put her hand on the new girl's shoulder.

"It's bound to be rather trying at first," she said, consolingly, "but we've all gone through it, you know. Would you like to have a talk before you go to bed? Well, cut along to the prefects' room and I'll be up in a sec."

A little later Monica, going up to bed in the room she shared with Shirley, paused with her hand on the door. There was a subdued murmur of conversation within; Shirley's brisk, clear tones, and a deeper, slower voice, with a curious lilt in it that belonged, she knew, to the Welsh girl. She pulled the door to softly, and went away. Ten minutes later she returned.

"My goodness!" she said elegantly, as she slipped into the room and closed the door behind her, "you've been having a good old gossip."

Shirley had wriggled out of her dress and was letting it slip down into a little heap at her feet.

"Well, why didn't you come in?" she demanded as she stepped out of the ring of pale-yellow georgette. "I saw you peep through the door. You might have helped to console the poor infant. She feels very homesick."

"Poor kid, she looks it," agreed Monica. "I didn't come in because when I opened the door diplomatically

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you seemed to be so deep in your confab that I tactfully withdrew. I've been wandering round the dormitories causing terror to evil-doers, who wonder what on earth I'm after."

Shirley smiled absently as she began unplaiting her hair.

"We've got to find friends for the Lloyd-Evans kid," she said. "I brought her up to talk to because I found her mooning about alone. No one wants to be unkind, but she's just out of everything, and feels it."

Monica pursed her lips.

"Don't be too optimistic, my dear. Adeleine and June and Elsie and some of that sort are being very sniffy over her."

Shirley glowered through a veil of hair.

"What for? I'd like to shake them," she said viciously.

"I'd help," Monica remarked sleepily, "but they wouldn't love her any better."

"Idiots! I wonder if Molly O'Neill would look after her?"

"I dare say she'd liven her up," yawned Monica, "but I doubt if she'd sacrifice herself for a new girl."

"It might keep her out of mischief," Shirley said thoughtfully. "Or perhaps the Vane twins would do."

Then suddenly she changed her mind. "No they won't. I'll try Eve. Monica——"

But Monica had retired behind the curtains of her own little domain.

Meanwhile Olwen, running along the corridor on her way to her dormitory, turned a sharp corner straight into the arms of a dark curly-headed slip of a girl who was waiting in the shadow.

"Whew!" she whistled softly, with a laugh. "That was some bang! Say, what's Monica up to, anyhow? I've been dodging her for the last ten minutes. Is the coast clear now?"

"I passed her going to her own room. Why?"

"What dormitory are you in?" asked Eve Latimer without answering the question. She was wrapped in a brilliant scarlet kimono, embroidered with flying birds and trails of delicate flowers. It suited Eve's dark colouring to perfection and Olwen's eyes wandered over her in fascinated admiration. Never had she seen anyone in real life wearing anything so beautiful, and it never occurred to her that it was eminently unsuitable for a young schoolgirl.

"Er—oh, Dormitory B."

"That's all right then. You're Olwen, aren't you? Ask Molly O'Neill to come up to No Man's Land, will you? Thanks awfully."

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Eve gathered up the folds of her wonderful garment and held it high enough to permit of her going upstairs two steps at a time. It rather marred the effect, but she was not thinking of that just then.

Olwen sighed as she turned away, and she glanced down at her white frock that the village dressmaker had "run up" for her. Somehow it looked dreadfully common to her eyes, and the thought of her nice useful flannelette dressing-gown hanging in her wardrobe was no consolation at all.

No one noticed her when she slipped into Dormitory B, though most of the cubicles were open and their owners either sitting on their beds in gaily striped pyjamas, or standing at the door of someone else's room discussing the events of the day.

"I think if the Vane twins are going to Mr. Henderson for maths *I* ought to go," Elsie Maitland was saying in an injured tone. She was wrapped in the curtains of Molly O'Neill's cubicle. It was a simpler way of keeping warm than putting on a dressing gown. Molly was sitting cross-legged on her bed busily sewing on a school uniform tunic.

"Well, and I'm sure if anyone *wants* to go to Mr. Henderson it's a pity they shouldn't have their heart's desire," she said, diving into her work basket in a search for a pair of scissors. "And I don't think it's

either of the Vanes would be grudging you the privilege, the way they're going on about it."

"I don't *want* to go to Mr. Henderson," Elsie said sulkily. "I'd hate it, but I'm quite as good as Josey, at any rate."

Molly bit off a length of cotton with her strong white teeth—the scissors having evaded her search—and glanced up at the speaker with a broad smile on her rosy, freckled face.

"There now, just listen to you," she mocked. "If I went on like that you'd say: 'You *are* Irish! Always got a grievance!'"

"Molly," said another voice—a shy one—and the girl draped in the curtain jumped so that Molly looked up anxiously at the rod across the doorway.

"I'd have you know," she said warningly, "that if you break that rod you'll have to own up. I paid for it once last term after hanging a swing on it. It isn't as strong as you'd think."

"Molly," persisted Olwen, the owner of the shy voice, who was very conscious of Elsie's eyes surveying her coldly and critically. "Eve says, will you please go up to No Man's Land? The coast is clear."

"I will not," Molly declared with decision. "Tell her I'm deeply engaged. I've torn my tunic in a way that beggars description and it will take me all my time

to make it hold together till the week-end—and then I'll make love to Matron. It's beyond me, sure it is!"

"What's all this?" inquired Adeleine Vestron, who was passing on her way from June Manley's cubicle. When Tredennings girls *did* think about such things they unanimously declared for Adeleine as "the beauty of Lestholme". With her pale-gold hair and grey eyes fringed with dark lashes, and her delicate features, she really merited the description, and a certain air of reserve seemed to set her apart from the others—no one felt they knew her very well. Now, as her kimono fell open from her slim figure in its gaily striped pyjamas, Olwen gazed at her in shy admiration. She was nearly as fascinating as Eve. Adeleine glanced at her carelessly.

"You'll never be in bed in time," she said indifferently.

"'Tisn't her fault," Molly explained. "She's brought a message."

"What does Eve want you for?" demanded Elsie.

"It's something she wants to show me," Molly returned evasively. Then glancing up and seeing Olwen's doubtful face, she said coaxingly:

"Would you go and tell her for me? I don't like to think of her waiting and waiting and me never

coming. ' She cometh not, she said, I am a-weary, a-weary, I would that I were dead ', I'd hate that, you know. It would be kind of you, and me that busy as never was." Molly's brogue grew richer as her voice grew more coaxing.

" Idiot!" laughed Elsie.

" And will I just say you've got to mend your tunic?" Olwen asked in her soft lilting voice. Elsie gave another little spurt of laughter and looked over her shoulder at Adeleine.

" These two!" she scoffed. " What with Molly's Irish, and Olwen's Welsh, and Eve's American, and Grizel's Scotch, I don't know what Tredennings is coming to."

Molly spared time to grimace at her.

" Never mind," she nodded to Olwen, whose cheeks had flamed at Elsie's laugh. " We're Celts, we two—what do we care for these Saxon churls? I don't know what Eve is; she can look after herself. That reminds me, are you going to tell her?"

" Yes, I'll go," Olwen replied, and Molly nodded her thanks and returned to her mending.

Elsie twisted herself in her curtain to watch Olwen cross the room.

" What a queer looking specimen," she said, with a laugh.

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“ From the backwoods,” Adeleine remarked with an amused smile.

“ The *weirdest* clothes!” added June, who had followed Adeleine.

“ It is mostly her clothes that are wrong, I think,” said Molly, without looking up. “ She’s got nice eyes, and doesn’t look bad in school togs.”

“ Hello!” called Eve, over the bannisters as Olwen ran upstairs. “ Did you tell her?”

“ She says she can’t come. She’s got to mend her tunic.”

“ Rotter!” remarked the lady of the scarlet kimono. “ Tell her I said so.”

CHAPTER III

“ A Family Affair ”

“ Eve, I want to speak to you.”

Eve was just starting off down through the gardens to the playing-fields. She had a tennis racket in each hand and was weighing them carefully, one against the other, while the Vane twins watched interestedly.

“ I think yours is a bit too light, Josey,” Eve was saying with an air of authority. “ You see, if it isn’t heavy enough you can’t get that—oh, do you want me *now*, Shirley?”

“ Yes, you can walk down with me instead of the Vanes.”

“ Right-o.” Eve relinquished Josey’s racket and turned back expectantly.

“ Are you due for a practice?” asked the prefect.

“ Not officially. Only a knock-about with the Vanes.”

“ Where is Olwen Lloyd-Evans? asked Shirley quietly.

Eve stared. “ Sakes!—oh, sorry—I don’t know.”

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“ Who does know?”

Eve still stared. “ What’s the matter? Has she run away or anything?”

“ I hope not, but it must be rotten being a new girl in a House where no one knows where you are or what you are doing.”

“ Oh,” Eve nodded. “ I see what you mean. I guess it *is* rotten being a new girl, anyhow—but *I* got on all right. You’ve got to show yourself friendly and then folks are all right to you.”

“ You wouldn’t have got on all right if Josey hadn’t taken you up, my child, don’t flatter yourself. Besides, you’re quite different. Where were you all last night?”

“ Last night?” Eve frowned thoughtfully. “ I think we were with some Courtenays girls—oh, do you know they’re starting a museum there? They——”

“ Yes, I know, but I want to go on with this matter first. Why didn’t you ask Olwen to go with you? She was moping all alone.”

“ Why didn’t——” began Eve indignantly. “ Well, really, Shirley, why should I more than anyone else?” she finished in an aggrieved tone. “ She’s such a queer sort of girl.”

“ Well, I wish you *would* take her up, Eve,” Shirley persisted.

Eve stopped short in the middle of the garden path

and stared at Shirley aghast. “ Me? Oh, Shirley, I *couldn't*! Why *are* you making such a dead set at *me*? I don't think I even like her. She'd spoil everything.”

“ Don't be a silly ass,” Shirley returned severely. “ I never knew a new girl upset things as you did when you came to Lestholme. I think it is your plain duty to make up for it by licking another girl into shape. She won't be nearly as much bother as you were. Someone's got to do it if you won't, and after all, it's a family affair.”

“ A family affair? Oh, Shirley, what *is* the matter with you? You *are* trying! She's no relation—oh, you mean because of the scholarship?”

“ Of course. Your family is responsible for her being here. She is your father's guest and you ought to make her feel at home.”

Eve gave an exasperated laugh which ended in a groan as she made a cut with her racket at a lilac bush as they passed.

“ I wish Pops had never thought of the scholarship,” she said crossly. “ He never asked me about it, and he generally *does* tell me about things. If he *had*, I'd have said, ‘ For goodness sake, wait till I've left.’ ”

“ I hope you wouldn't have been such a selfish little beast,” said Shirley promptly. “ I believe some day we shall all be proud of having had Olwen here, and *you'll*

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be fearfully bucked!" She wondered what on earth had made her say that; she had never intended to, in fact she didn't know that she had ever thought of it before.

"I shan't enjoy my term at all," Eve said with the air of a martyr.

"I think you'll find a great deal more in her than you imagine," Shirley said, and Eve suddenly laughed.

"That sounded *just* like Miss Travers," she said, 'I wonder if I'd get to talk like that if they made me a prefect—which they won't.'

"They jolly well won't, my child, if you go on in the way you've begun," Shirley agreed grimly. She took herself rather seriously, and did not like being laughed at. But not many people do.

"All right," said Eve, "I'll go and look up this blessed Olwen, and see if I can do anything. But, look here, Shirley, if she's impossible I guess you'll not have to be down on me if I don't keep on."

"I guess I won't," Shirley laughed mockingly. "All right then, I'll leave her in your hands."

Eve's momentary cheerfulness deserted her with a rush, and she groaned again as Shirley stopped and turned to go back to the House.

"It's all very well," she began protestingly, but Shirley only laughed, and with a wave of her hand began to run across the grass.

Josey and Jackie were waiting on the bench by the first court when the disconsolate Eve arrived.

“ Hello! Anything wrong?” they inquired with one voice.

“ I should think there was,” she grumbled. “ Let me sit between you and I’ll tell you.”

“ It’s all very well,” she repeated at the end of her story,” but I think Shirley’s just wiped her hands of her by putting her on to me.”

“ Well,” said Josey slowly, “ you couldn’t expect Shirley to take her on—could you? A prefect couldn’t.”

“ No, but——” Eve’s voice faded off into silence. She wondered if Jackie had not looked slightly relieved. Jackie had been very good, of course, but she had always been a little jealous of Eve’s friendship with Josey. So you couldn’t wonder if she was not as indignant as Eve would have wished. “ Well, I’ve promised to try,” she continued, staring across the playing fields with a vague feeling of dismay creeping over her. Was it possible that she had been “ one too many ” and not known it?

“ It’s topping of you,” Josey said heartily. “ And you can always count on us—we’ll help, won’t we, Jackie.”

“ Rather!” agreed Jackie. “ Meanwhile, hadn’t we better have a game? We bagged this court from Kath-

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leen and her lot, and Molly's glowering for all she's worth. Come on, Molly, make a fourth, will you?" she called.

It was a hard game and Eve and Josey emerged victors by a point.

"Either you're off colour, or we're improving tremendously," Jackie said breathlessly. "I'm no end bucked when I run you up."

Eve laughed. "I can't think which is the politest thing for me to say," she said, "but I *do* think I'll have to practise frightfully hard if I'm going to do any good. Jackie, that drive of yours is ripping. I say, I must go and find Olwen."

Molly stared.

"Olwen? Why? You aren't chumming with her, are you? Oh, I remember you sent her to me last night. Sorry I couldn't come, by the way."

"Yes, you rotter," retaliated Eve, "I told you I'd get a play for the Tredennings Players? Well, I've got it and I wanted to show you."

"I knew what it was," nodded Molly, "Show it me now, can't you?"

"I don't carry it about with me, idiot! The twins have seen it and they think it's top-hole and quite easy for us to get up—and original!"

"Original? Who's originated it, then? You?"

“ Me? Really, Molly, are you potty? No, it’s Laurel’s, so you know it’s highbrow. You know I said the other day I thought it would be rather sport if we could keep it a dead secret and call ourselves the Tredennings Players and then at the end of the term give a play——”

“ As Faraday did last term,” interrupted Molly.

“ Yes, but not like the Faraday play,” corrected Eve haughtily. “ I thought they mulled their affair awfully. No, I’d a sort of hunch that if I asked Laurel tactfully I’d find she had written a play and hidden it away somewhere. She had, and she’s going to let us have it. I promised we’d be real serious over it. But she’ll be awfully ratty if we talk about it.”

“ I won’t, honest. Do tell me what it’s about?”

“ The time of Queen Elizabeth—ruffs and hoops and ‘ gadzooks ’, you know. I say, was America discovered then? Will my accent matter?”

“ Awfully,” laughed Josey. “ The accent wasn’t discovered till some time later, my dear.”

“ Pity,” grinned Eve. “ Never mind, don’t you think it’ll be a ripping idea? All home grown, play and all?”

“ The idea’s all right,” said Jackie doubtfully, “ but whether we can do it is quite another thing. What is it called?”

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“ ‘ The Youngest Lady-in-Waiting ’. Of course we can do it! Well, I really must go—I’ve got to look for Olwen or she’ll be moping again.”

“ I saw her going down to the cricket ground,” Jackie said.

“ Here goes, then,” sighed Eve. “ Carry on. I’m going to find her.”

Olwen *was* on the cricket ground. She had wandered out after dinner with a book, and had walked down the garden reading, and trying hard not to notice that everyone she met seemed to have a chum, and to be on easy terms with everyone else. How she longed for someone to come and forcibly shut her book and slip an arm into hers and be rude to her! But no one cared whether she read or not; no one was rude. If anyone knocked her by accident in a wild rush past, the culprit would turn and say, with a smile, “ So sorry,” and promptly forget her.

The tennis courts held no attraction for her, though she had heard that Tredennings was the crack House for tennis. They had gained the Northshire County Schools shield last year, and it was hanging in the Hall now.

A group of children from Malevers were sitting watching the cricket before going for their afternoon walk, and they looked up curiously as the elder girl

came along. Anyone from the other Houses was a source of interest to them.

Olwen looked up suddenly from her book and caught the shyly friendly stare of Jean Armstrong, who was balancing herself on the back of a very much occupied seat. Olwen smiled and Jean smiled back.

“ Is there room for me on that seat?” inquired Olwen, conscious of the frankly curious stare of the “ Babes ”. There was a prompt wriggling and condensing of small active bodies into the smallest possible compass, and a blank space of green seat miraculously appeared.

“ Heaps!” an eager chorus assured her, and Olwen squeezed herself in happily. It was so nice to find anyone eager for her company.

“ I wish you’d take your legs away, Jean,” complained a plump, fair little person, who was being ruthlessly crushed between two bony youngsters, while Jean’s knees bored into her from behind.

“ Sorry, but I must put them somewhere,” Jean explained. “ Lean forward, Celia, and I’ll wriggle along.” She did wriggle along till her knees were uncomfortably close to Olwen.

“ You’re new, aren’t you?” she inquired of the elder girl’s right ear. “ We’ve got six new girls at Malevers this term.”

"Yes, I'm new. Have you got nice new girls?" inquired Olwen gravely. She really did not know how to talk to children, but with half a dozen on the seat, leaning forward to catch every word, and Jean perched behind conducting the interview, she felt it necessary to do her best.

"There are all sorts," Jean said. "In six you get quite a variety."

"I'm at Tredennings," Olwen informed them.

"My sister's there," the plump person interjected, swinging a pair of sturdy legs energetically. "She's called Adeleine—Adeleine Vestron."

"Oh, I know her! A big girl, isn't she?"

"'Um. She'll be in the Sixth soon," the plump one nodded. "My name is Celia."

"The nicest new girl we've got," shrilled a flax-haired child at the end of the row, "is called Deirdre—did you ever hear that name?"

"I've read it," Olwen said, "but I've never really *known* a Deirdre. Have you ever heard mine—Olwen?"

No one had, but they thought it was pretty.

"But you are English, aren't you?" inquired Jean.

"No," said Olwen promptly. "I'm Welsh—no, it's *not* the same thing at all! It's—oh, *look* at those children crossing the field, they're much too near the wicket Who are they?"

“ Oh, *that's* Deirdre—and—Jane, and—I forget the other. She's new, too,” said Celia. “ I expect they don't know we aren't supposed to cross the field at all if they're playing. Hurry up!” she called to the trespassers. “ Awful if one of them caught a ball on her head,” she said cheerfully.

Olwen jumped up nervously. The cricketers were intent on their game, and any moment a ball might indeed come down on the heedless trio. The “ man in ” had been doing little beyond protecting her wicket till this moment, when she hit a boundary. And then everyone saw the children strolling along right in the line of the low-flying ball, close together, as they discussed some engrossing topic.

From all parts of the field came shrieks of “ Hurry up!” “ Look out, Malevers!” “ Duck your heads!” But it was Olwen who, realizing the danger almost before it existed, had sprung from the seat, scattering its other occupants in all directions, and with a wild dash had leapt to meet the ball and caught it neatly in her cupped hands.

“ You little *idiots!*” cried Ruth Mason, the games captain, angrily, pushing the frightened children out of the way. “ Don't you know you musn't cross like this? And haven't you the common sense to look out for balls? I say, that was an awfully smart bit of work

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of yours," she went on, turning to Olwen. "I'm afraid I don't know who you are?"

"Olwen Lloyd-Evans of Tredennings," said a voice behind, and Olwen turned quickly to see Eve at her shoulder. "Jolly good sprinter, isn't she? I started to run myself, but I was too far off. Olwen did it in a kick and a jump."

"Oh well, I was watching, you see," said Olwen awkwardly. "I thought it might happen."

"Jolly good thing you did," said Ruth, turning away. "Never let me catch any of you kids on the cricket-ground during play again," she warned the assembled 'Babes'.

Eve slipped her arm in Olwen's.

"I say, if you can run like that," she said, "you ought to be good for some sort of game. Come over to the courts."

It was rather pleasant to be dragged off like that, even if she did not want to play tennis, and the admiring gaze of the group of Malevers, as she turned to nod goodbye, was pleasant too.

CHAPTER IV

A Visitor for Olwen

Eve Latimer was not her father's daughter for nothing. People don't start business, as Mr. Latimer had done, with five pence three farthings in their pockets, and end as millionaires unless they have plenty of determination and strength of character. So Eve, having reluctantly made up her mind that it was her work to see Olwen through her first term at Lestholme, set her teeth and determined to make a good job of it.

It was not an easy task. Olwen was shy and awkward, and would always rather sit poring over a book than race down to the playing fields for a hard game at tennis or a practice at the nets.

But in school there was quite another Olwen—literally, she did not seem to be the same person. Her work was always excellent, though there were times when she was seriously handicapped by her lack of systematic teaching.

What Tredennings, as a whole, thought of her was

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doubtful. They had moments of pride when her name topped the form lists over and over again; but they considered, as a pace setter, she was considerably overdoing it. Adeleine Vestron, June Manley, and Elsie Maitland, especially, felt the pace rather trying, and Elsie, whose greatest friend was Doreen Bruce of Courtenays, formerly the star of the Fifth, was jealous on her friend's behalf.

"You can't really blame the girl for being cleverer than your beloved Doreen," Jackie Vane said, after Elsie had been making some slighting remarks. "What *you* really want is a policy of 'ca' canny 'l'"

"A *what?*" demanded Elsie.

Jackie laughed.

"Ask Olwen. Olwen, come here a sec, will you? You come from a mining district, don't you? Tell these benighted people what 'ca' canny ' means."

Olwen, on her way from a music lesson, paused for a moment at the door of the Common Room to hear what Jackie had to say.

"Oh, but everybody knows that," she said, flushing. "It's the principle of not letting the strong man do so much work that it is set for a standard for the weaker men, and makes life too hard for them."

"Well, it's a very good idea, too, *I* think," said June.

"June thinks you've no regard for people with weak

brains like ours," Jackie explained. "You're setting too high a standard, Olwen. We poor things are getting out of breath trying to keep up with you."

Olwen smiled and moved away from the doorway without answering, for the simple reason that she could not think of a suitable reply.

"What on earth made you say a thing like that, Jackie," Adeleine burst out, as soon as Olwen was out of ear-shot? "What is the good of telling the girl how clever she is? I should hate her to think I cared whether she was top of the lists or not."

"She's conceited enough already," grumbled June.

"She's nothing of the sort," Eve broke in suddenly, looking up from the letter she was writing to her friend Sadie Van Steer, in a little New England village. "Whatever else she is, she isn't conceited, and I ought to know seeing she's my chum."

"Oh, what stuff!" chimed in Elsie, with a scornful laugh. "You couldn't chum with her, Eve—how could you? She isn't your style a bit."

"Too brainy for me, I know," murmured Eve, bent over her letter.

"Did you say her people were miners, Jackie?" asked Adeleine.

"Not that I know of," Jackie replied promptly. "I say a good many stupid things, but seeing I know

nothing about her I shouldn't be likely to say that. Oh—I know what you mean! I said she came from a mining district, didn't I? Well, I know she comes from Wales, and there are mines in Wales—that's my elaborate reasoning."

"I see. Well, really, you could imagine anything. She's so uncouth and—well, anyhow, it's very sporting of Eve to take her up. I hope she won't get tired of it."

"Thank you, Adeleine, thank you," Eve retorted, with an air of exaggerated gratitude that made the others laugh, but in her heart she earnestly echoed the wish.

It was a few days later that, early in the afternoon, Olwen received a summons to the Head's house. It was the first time she had been there since her arrival at Lestholme. Some of the girls at Tredennings would have had guilty stirrings of conscience, but Olwen could not think of anything sufficient to warrant the Head's attention. In common with most of Lestholme she adored Miss Travers in true school-girl fashion, though the Head could be so severe at times that it was an acid test of devotion.

This afternoon she smiled as Olwen entered the room timidly.

"Well, Olwen," she said, "how are you getting on? I've been hearing very good reports of you from your

Form Mistress. Still, that's not what I want to talk about now. There's someone here I think you know."

Olwen followed Miss Travers' eyes and turned round. Sitting behind the door, so that she had not seen her on entering, was a stout, good-tempered looking country woman. As the girl's eyes fell on her the woman's face broke into one big smile, and she jumped up quickly.

"Oh, Olwen, Olwen *fach!*"¹ she cried, and folded her arms round the girl, who gave a little gasp and held her tightly.

Miss Travers looked at them for a minute with a smile, and then gazed over the lawns with rather a troubled expression on her face. She had not liked that convulsive grip of Olwen's—was the child not happy? Olwen was the first to speak. She drew herself away gently and gave a little laugh.

"Why, Marget!" she cried. "Fancy your coming so far away from home. It was a very great surprise to me, indeed."

"There wass an excursion, look you," beamed Marget, "and I said to Gwilym, 'There iss no one to go and see Olwen *fach*, and she away there in a strange place. Maybe she will like to see someone from the valley'."

Miss Travers gathered her papers together as Marget

¹ *Dear*; literally, *little*.

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was talking and locked them in her desk. Then she said quietly:

“ I’m sure Olwen is very glad, and feels how kind it was of you to take so much trouble. Now I am going out, so I will leave you to have a little talk together, and Olwen—will you take Mrs. Williams through the school? You would like that, wouldn’t you?” she said as she rose and looked with grave kindness on Marget.

“ I would, indeed,” Marget beamed, and only Miss Travers noticed the girl’s nervous flush.

“ I’m afraid you won’t see many of the girls,” the Head continued, “ because they’ll be out of doors, but Olwen will be able to explain everything to you. And I’ll leave orders for tea to be sent in——”

“ That iss very kind of you,” interrupted Marget, “ but I was going to ask if I might take Olwen out to tea? There will likely be some pastry-cooks nearby, whatever. Would that be allowed?”

“ Oh yes, certainly, if you prefer it,” laughed Miss Travers,” though I don’t think there are many nice tea places near here. You must please yourself about that, as long as Olwen is back for evening school.”

When Miss Travers had taken her graceful departure and left them alone, Marget’s questions came thick and fast, and so thickly sprinkled with “ indeets ” and

“whateffers” that Olwen laughed joyfully at the familiar sound.

“Oh, Marget *fach*, it *is* nice to hear you,” she sighed as she pushed the buxom Welsh woman into the chair generally sacred to the slender form of Miss Travers. “They think it so funny here because I say ‘indeed’ and have a Welsh accent.”

“And it’s a very good accent to have, whateffer,” Marget said indignantly, “though, look you, perhaps it iss not well not to be able to talk the English, too. But, tell me, Olwen, are they good to you?”

“Of course,” answered Olwen, with a laugh. “What would you be thinking, Marget Williams? Very good to me, they are, and it’s fine to be a Lestholme girl. Always all my life I shall be able to say, ‘I was at Lestholme’ and that will be a great help when I will be making my way in the world.”

“And have you good food to eat?” inquired Marget anxiously. “I have heard—it was Llewellyn Jones that telt me—that even in grand schools——”

“You dear old silly!” The girls would not have known this laughing Olwen who sat on the arm of Miss Travers’ chair and kissed the stout Welshwoman who was ensconced in its depths. “Do I look not well fed?”

Marget studied her with anxious eyes.

“Indeed, and I wouldn’t like to be saying,” she replied. “There is a something different, look you, and—are you happy, *anwyl*?”¹ She leant forward and put her work-worn hands on Olwen’s tenderly. “Tell Marget,” she whispered, her eyes searching the girl’s face.

Olwen’s eyes misted, and though she smiled it was a wavering attempt.

“You wouldn’t be wanting me not to miss you all, Marget *fach*,” she said, with a little quiver in her voice. “Sometimes I’m homesick—oh, indeed, but I am! Then I tell myself how lucky I’ve been. Fancy, if I’d never got the scholarship, I’d never have come away to school at all, and I’d never have learnt anything more where I was.”

“And you’re learning what you want? They know how to teach you?”

“Yes indeed, whatever!” Olwen laughed at her. “And I’m going to work so hard, and if I get another scholarship, Marget Williams, I’ll be going to Cambridge, maybe, and then I’ll be able to get a good post.”

“And perhaps, sometime, you’ll be back here, sitting in this very chair and with a right to be in it, which I haven’t, indeed and indeed.”

¹ Darling.

Olwen gave a little squeal.

"Oh, Marget, *don't!* It sounds almost profane," she said, with a laugh. "Now tell me all about everybody—Mr. Rhys?" And nothing loath, Mrs. Williams began the chronicles of the little village. "I can't think of anyone else to ask about," Olwen said at last, with a deep sigh. "Would you like to come and look round the school before we go—if you're really going to take me out, Marget?"

"Indeed and we're going out," declared Marget. "I didn't want to offend the lady teacher, but I didn't want us to sit drinking her tea, and her keeping out of her own room—and I wouldn't have liked it any better, look you, if she'd had it with us. And I'd like fine to see your school, Olwen."

There was no doubt that Mrs. Williams was slightly overawed by the view of Lestholme from the quadrangle as Olwen pointed out, with newly awakened pride, the various Houses: the School House with Hall and Library; the lawns and cedars; the Welsh hills across the river, even the distant noises of Lestholme docks, the last far-flung tentacles of the great city.

"It's a fine place, look you," she whispered. "Gwilym will be proud when I tell him."

"This is *my* House," Olwen said. "Tredennings. You see the coat of arms over the door? That's the

Tredennings' arms, you know. Sir Gervase Tredennings was one of the founders. And there's Malevers over there, where the small girls live, and Faraday, and Courtenays. Come in, Marget."

Marget followed her into the big square hall, so cool and airy after the glare of the afternoon sun. The door at the other end was wide open to the gardens, and some of the girls were working among the flowers, and others sitting under the shade of the trees while from the distant playing fields came a faint sound of voices and laughter.

"And these young ladies are your friends, Olwen *fach*?" asked Marget, screwing up her eyes to get a better view of the young ladies in question.

"Ye—es. That girl under the weeping ash and the other crossing the path are the Bob-tail."

"The *what*?"

Olwen laughed. She knew Marget was going to treasure up every bit of information she could remember, and she was going to make it as easy for her as she could. "Bob-tail. They're twins, and one's bobbed and the other has a pig-tail—it's the only way to tell them apart."

"*Caton pawb!*"¹ ejaculated Marget, relapsing into Welsh in her interest.

¹ Good gracious!

“ And this is the Common Room,” Olwen continued, flinging the door open. “ It’s our sitting-room, you know. Go right in.”

“ Well, indeed and indeed!” said Marget, stepping in cautiously. “ What a fine big room it iss, Olwen—oh!” She stepped back suddenly, covered with confusion. “ There iss a young lady there,” she said in a loud whisper.

Olwen’s face flushed. “ It doesn’t matter, Marget,” she reassured her. “ Come in, it’s all right.” She went in, in front of her visitor this time, and nodded to the girl writing a letter in a chair by the window with an air of assurance she was very far from feeling, for Adeleine’s faintly amused gaze always had a paralysing effect on her. “ I’m just showing a friend round,” she said.

Adeleine looked up from her letter and smiled.

“ Good afternoon,” she said, looking curiously at Marget.

“ Good afternoon, miss,” Marget beamed. “ It iss a very fine place, indeed, that you have here. I’ve been saying to Olwen how I will be telling them all about it when I get back.”

“ It’s not bad, is it?” Adeleine agreed. “ Has Olwen shown you the Chapel and Hall? No? Oh, you’ll like those.”

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“Indeed, I am sure,” said Marget. “It is a fine thing, whatever, to come to a school like this.”

Olwen moved impatiently. What would Marget say next if Adeleine talked to her any more in that easy, pleasant way, while her eyes were busy taking in every detail of her homely dress and manner.

“Will you come and look at the Dormitory?” she broke in, hurrying Marget out of the room into safety.

“And was that young lady one of your friends, Olwen *fach?*” inquired Marget, toiling up the stairs in the wake of Olwen’s swift young feet.

“No indeed,” replied Olwen hastily. “This is my cubicle,” she went on a minute later. “Sit down and take a rest.”

Marget sat down heavily on the only chair, and Olwen, perched on the bed, smiled at her mopping her face with a handkerchief.

“*Caton pawb!*” she murmured. “It’s a nice room you’ve got, Olwen.” Then a glance at the wardrobe reminded her of something. “I must not forget—Mrs. Jones was asking me—did you like the dress she made for your evenings? I said I would ask you. Was it fine enough, Olwen? I wouldn’t have you not as fine as the other young ladies.”

“School girls aren’t supposed to be fine,” answered

Olwen evasively. "Tell Mrs. Jones nearly everyone wears white, and as simple as possible."

"She will be glad," said Marget, "she fretted she had not made it fine enough for the grand school you're at. And, Olwen *fach*, I never asked what the lady teacher thinks of your voice?"

"Hs'sh!" laughed Olwen, with her finger on her lip. "No one knows I've got one! No, listen, Marget. You don't know how hard I've to work. There's a heap of things I ought to know that I've never been taught, so I've to do back work, as well as the lessons for the day; do you understand?"

"Yes," Marget's face was very disappointed. "But it iss not an ordinary voice, whatever——"

"Oh, Marget! And you know you, yourself, wouldn't let me sing much at home because it would interfere with my lessons."

"Yes—but I was afraid it would make you mix too much with the village folk. I have tried to bring you up like your mother's people."

"I know, you old dear. And now you want me to shine, don't you?" Olwen laughed and patted the old woman's hand. "But I haven't time, really. If my voice is as good as the Vicar thinks they'd make me practise, and I can't spare the time. Wait till I've worked up a bit, Marget."

Marget sighed. "There's one other thing," she said. "Have you met that girl? Mr. Latimer's daughter? Is she here? You never said."

Olwen nodded.

"Is she nice to you?"

"Why yes, indeed, Marget, why should she not be?" Olwen said lightly. "And now if you're rested will you come and see the Chapel?"

"Indeed yes," said Marget, stepping out of the cubicle into the dormitory. She stood for a minute and looked down the room and out of the wide open windows. "It iss a great thing that you are here, Olwen *fach*," she said slowly.

CHAPTER V

Eve to the Rescue

"This *is* a stodgy old term," remarked Anne Richmond at tea the next day. "Nothing has happened at all yet."

Josey at the other end of the table gasped dramatically. "Don't say 'yet', for goodness sake," she begged; "we had all the happenings *I* want last year—witness Jackie's bobbed head."

"I believe that's one reason why we've been so uneventful," Dorothy laughed. "We do know where you and Jackie are now. I believe you used to go out of the room as Josey, and come back and say you were Jackie."

Josey meditated. "That's rather a good stunt," she said. "I wonder if we ever did it quite like that. All the same, you know, we never *said* we were each other, did we, Jack my boy?"

"Never," grinned Jackie. "We let *them* say it; our actions spoke louder than words. I don't like anchovy

paste on seed cake! I wondered what tasted so horrid, and there's a lump of paste on the other side of the cake. Why are we so short of plates?" she asked pathetically.

"It's most extravagant of you," Josey reproved her, removing the anchovy paste jar out of her reach. "I'm glad it tastes beastly, serves you right!"

Olwen, a little farther down the table, was cutting slices out of a big plum cake that Marget had brought her.

"Have some, Jackie," she suggested. "It'll take the nasty taste away. Pass it down, please, and help yourselves."

"Stars, what a topping cake!" Jackie said. "Have you got a birthday, Olwen? Thanks awfully."

"Just the sort I like," murmured Eve, selecting a slice as she passed it on. "It's like what we used to have when I stayed with my cousin in N'York. Her cook was a coloured woman and *some* cook, I can tell you."

"You Americans think so much of eating and drinking," Adeleine laughed. "If you read an American book there's always such a lot about fried chicken and cream toast—what is cream toast?—and johnny cakes and——"

"Oh, do stop," begged Eve, "I'm getting real

homesick. Here, pass on Olwen's cake; aren't you going to have any?"

"No, thank you," said Adeleine. She would have rather liked some, but knowing the next remark she was going to make, preferred to be under no obligations. "Did your mother like Lestholme, Olwen?" she asked carelessly, but something in the tone made everyone stop talking and look up uneasily. Olwen stared; she really did not understand.

"My mother?" she repeated stupidly.

"Yes, when you showed her round yesterday—or when was it?"

Olwen flamed a sudden angry crimson and the smouldering light in her eyes broke into flame. "It was not my mother," she said quickly, and her Welsh accent became more and more marked as she spoke. "My mother is—I haven't a mother—you know."

"I'm sorry," said Adeleine. "I couldn't know, of course. She seemed a very nice sort of person and very fond of you, so naturally——"

"It was not 'naturally' at all," Olwen burst out. "It was just Marget Williams—Marget who has always been good to me. I live with her, if you want to know, and I'm very fond of her, but she would be just as angry as I am if she heard you say she was my mother."

"Oh dear," sighed Adeleine, "I assure you I don't

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want to know anything about it. It really doesn't matter."

"It does matter!" Olwen's voice broke suddenly, and the girls looked at her in consternation. Eve put her hand on her arm.

"Never mind, Olwen," she whispered uncomfortably, but Olwen had eyes and ears for no one but Adeleine who was wishing with all her heart she had left the Welsh girl alone. "Little spit-fire," she muttered.

"You knew quite well," Olwen continued, controlling her voice with an effort. "You heard me call her 'Marget', only you want to insult me—but it's not *me*, it's——" she stopped suddenly, struggling for composure.

"Don't take any notice of Adeleine," interposed Jackie, before anyone else could speak. "She's only ragging you—shut up, Adeleine!"

Adeleine laughed, but when she looked up she met the wrathful stare of several pairs of eyes and turned quickly to talk to June. Olwen's breath caught suddenly and she sprang to her feet, knocking over her cup, pushed back her chair, caught her foot in it and sent it flying against the girl at the next table, and without stopping to see the damage, she rushed out of the Dining-hall.

"You perfectly sickening idiot, Adeleine," Eve cried as she tried to stem the flood of tea from the overturned cup.

"*I* didn't do it," retorted Adeleine.

"It's the perfectly logical outcome of your own ill-bred behaviour," remarked Laurel West, from the table behind. "I happened to overhear you."

Josey giggled. "Logical outcome!" she whispered to Eve. "Isn't that just like Laurel!"

Eve did not smile. She got up from her seat. "I'm going after Olwen," she announced.

At the prefects' table, the conversation had ceased suddenly at the crash of Olwen's chair.

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Elizabeth adjusting the pince-nez.

"Someone ill?" wondered Barbie, turning round to look.

"Your little lot, Shirley," Ruth nodded at her. "Too bad of them, because it'll mean mistresses in for tea or we'll have to take the tables if they behave like that."

"It's that awfully brainy Welsh girl that's bolted," Barbie said curiously. "She can't be ill or someone would go with her."

"Your American's gone now," Elizabeth said. "What a hopeless mess! Shirley——"

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“I’m going to see to it,” groaned Shirley. “Bother them!” And she strode wrathfully to the scene of action. “What on earth are you girls doing?” she demanded. “What a horrible mess, Jackie; you’d better go and find a maid to wipe it up. Now, what’s the matter? Was Olwen ill?”

There was an embarrassed silence, and silence being an unusual thing at this particular table, the occupants of all the surrounding ones were casting inquiring glances in its direction.

“Well, surely someone can say whether the girl was ill or not? Eve went to look after her, I suppose?” Shirley’s eyes were beginning to flash and she glanced down the table. “Doreen?”

Doreen shook her head. “It was something to do with Tredennings,” she answered with the aloofness of another House.

“Anne Richmond, then?” Shirley was impatient and Anne smiled sheepishly.

“Olwen got the wind up a bit,” she explained elegantly. “So she bolted and upset her tea, and Eve went to calm her down.”

“Oh!” Shirley’s “Oh” spoke volumes. “Who had been ragging her so that she couldn’t stand it any longer?”

“I suppose you’d say it was my fault,” Adeleine

said scornfully. "She had a visitor the other day and I took for granted it was her mother, and she goes off the deep end over it. How was I to know?"

"You can't know a girl's relatives by instinct," supplemented June.

Shirley frowned. She had not seen Marget Williams, nor heard much about her, and it was difficult to know how much Adeleine was to blame.

"Well, it's disgraceful conduct all round. You might be a ragged-school treat from your behaviour. If you can't be trusted to behave properly I shall have to sit at the table at tea-time—and you won't hate it half as much as I shall."

Shirley went back with a worried little pucker on her forehead.

"If there's anything I hate more than a sneak it's a snob," she remarked, as she slipped into her place with a sigh.

"What have they been doing?" inquired Elizabeth. "Ragging your Welsh girl? That's just what I was afraid of."

"Well, it's your cousin that's doing it" retorted Shirley. "You might tell her that sort of thing is—not—done."

Meanwhile Eve had run Olwen to earth in a corner of the Library, sitting by the big table, her arms flung

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across it and her head down on them. Eve went in softly and sat on the edge of the table.

“ Say, Olwen,” she coaxed, “ sit up and talk to me.”

“ Do go away,” came in muffled tones of exasperation.

Eve dug her hands deep into the pockets of her jumper and whistled softly to herself. Then she tried again.

“ I’m real sorry you feel sore over Adeleine,” she began. “ I know how it is, because the first term I was here some of the girls—June’s sister for one, and Elsie—made some pretty nasty remarks about Pops. Of course the newspapers were talking quite a lot about him then over the Red Square deal, and they didn’t love him much—not the British papers, anyway. And they told all they knew about him—and lots more——”

“ It isn’t the same thing at all,” objected the muffled voice.

“ Wa—al,” drawled Eve, putting a real American twang into her voice for the occasion, “ it’s so like that the difference isn’t worth mentioning. I guess I care about my father as much as you do about your mother.”

Olwen sat up suddenly and wiped her eyes.

“ I don’t mean *that*. But what could they say about your father?”

"Oh, Pops is a self-made man, they said; and of course in America we think nothing of that! And they tried to make out he wouldn't be educated and would have a dreadful accent—I guess he has a bit," she added reflectively. "Of course they didn't say it straight out, but I knew."

"It isn't," said Olwen, "that I'm the least bit ashamed of Marget—I do hope they won't think I am. But Adeleine meant to be nasty, and when anyone is dead and people—oh, I can't explain."

"I know," Eve nodded. "Do you remember your mother?"

"Yes—it's only five years ago. She was so little and dainty and sweet, and she had the prettiest voice. Oh, indeed I remember—that's why——"

"I know. I should feel just the same about it, but I don't suppose Adeleine really thought how you would take it. It was just ragging."

Olwen didn't answer and Eve continued.

"You're real lucky to remember your mother. I can't remember mine a bit, only Pops has always said *she* was dainty and little, as you say yours was. We don't either of us seem like our mothers, do we?"

"I don't. I'm a great clumsy thing."

"Stuff! Well, anyhow, you've got brains enough to make up for anything. It's just because you're so

clever that some of them are so catty—you make them work so hard to keep up. We all have to, of course, or go under. *I'm* not fretting any."

Olwen looked up at her desolately. Eve looked so care-free, so full of life and energy as she sat there, tossing her boyish head and smiling.

"You see," she said, "it means so much to me—this scholarship. I haven't much money and I must get a post when I leave school so I don't want to waste a bit of my education."

"You poor kid," said Eve sympathetically. "It's rotten luck for you and I think you're what Pops calls 'bully'. You can just bank on me every time. What a lark! You and me against the world! But haven't you got *any* relations? It must be awful to be stranded."

Olwen hesitated and flushed hotly. "I don't remember my father; and mother died five years ago and she'd lost sight of her relations for years."

"But how exciting!" cried Eve. "Any time a 'long lost' might turn up and adopt you and leave you a fortune."

"Oh don't," Olwen drew back as if something had hurt her. "I do very well with Marget, and the Vicar, he is good to me too, but he is an old bachelor and all for his books. So I can't help being different from other girls, can I?"

“ Well, but you’re not going to be,” declared Eve stoutly, throwing a friendly arm over Olwen’s shoulder as she slipped from her perch. “ Come on, let’s face the world together.”

CHAPTER VI

The Head Makes an Announcement

Whenever the Head had anything particular to say to the school, she generally chose the time after evening prayers and took prayers in Hall.

Hall had nearly the same ecclesiastical effect as Chapel, with its lofty timbered roof and long lancet windows filled with softly tinted glass. When prayers coincided with sunset the sun came pouring in through the west windows and made a gorgeous colour scheme of the white evening dresses.

There was a small organ here, as well as in Chapel, and Miss Woods played beautifully. To-night the hymn had been, "For all the Saints", to the tune by Vaughan Williams, and the singing had been as beautiful as the playing. Miss Travers had stood with her eyes on her book, listening to the rise and fall of the fresh young voices. Olwen, who was not singing either, watched her and knew just what she was feeling—something that caught her breath suddenly. A sharp

nudge from Eve brought her down from the clouds.

“Why don’t you sing?” Then, as Olwen shook her head, Eve persisted. “Don’t you ever? Can’t you?” But the next verse began and she could not miss a note of it. Olwen’s mind went back to the day when she had gained the children’s prize for solo singing at the local Eisteddfod, and she shut her lips tightly, her voice must not come between her and the serious work of her life; so the music swelled round her and swelled her heart to bursting, and she stood watching Miss Travers.

When prayers were over, the Head held up an arresting hand.

“Sit down, girls,” she said. “There’s something I want to say to you all. You know we have been wanting for a long time to have a memorial to Old Girls who have brought honour to the school. We’ve discussed the matter—the Staff, the governors and I—and we think a window in the Chapel will be the most suitable thing. Just as the window in the Cathedral, of which we are all so proud when we remember a Lestholme—a Tredennings girl—is pictured there, reminds us of all noble women, so our window will remind us of those who specially belong to us because they lived in these old houses and crossed these old lawns years ago. And I hope it will remind us all that what they built

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up we must never let down—Lestholme honour is in our keeping.

“ Now for the financial part. I believe we should all like to have a share in this, even the poorest of us, wouldn’t we? So will you all see what you can do in the way of collecting, earning, or saving money, and take it to the prefect of your House? And lastly, we are to have a grand Garden Fête at the end of the term, at which we shall have a stall for the sale of novel and artistic articles ”—the Head paused and pursed her mouth in a funny whimsical little way she had, and the girls laughed—“ so there is an opportunity for all of us. And we shall have music and perhaps side shows of various kinds—but this is only an advance notice. Good-night, girls.”

The girls streamed out of Hall talking excitedly.

“ Who was the Tredennings girl in the Cathedral window?” Olwen asked, as she and Eve emerged from the crowd and turned to the path that led to the river wall.

Eve looked vague; she was thinking of something else. “ Oh, that’s Margaret Braden,” she said, bringing herself back with an effort. “ You know, she was a missionary-explorer-doctor sort of person——”

“ I know all about Margaret Braden, of course ” said Olwen, “ only I didn’t know she was a Treden-

nings girl. Oh indeed, but that is fine, Eve."

"If you'd been here a term or two ago you'd know all about her," grinned Eve reminiscently. "Tredennings was a rotten house then, and Shirley was made Head, and worked at it till she pulled it up again. She dangled Margaret Braden in front of us till we were afraid to breathe for fear of tarnishing her memory."

"I didn't know," repeated Olwen.

"But didn't you see her picture in the Common Room with 'Margaret Braden of Tredennings' written underneath?" Eve demanded incredulously.

Olwen shook her head. "No. At least I saw a picture of someone, of course, but I couldn't see the writing."

Eve looked at her curiously. "How weird! There was something the other day you said you couldn't see—what was it? Oughtn't you to wear glasses?"

"No, indeed!" said Olwen hastily. "I see quite well enough."

"You're afraid of spoiling your beauty," laughed Eve airily. They had reached the long paved walk that overlooked the promenade and the river, and several girls were already sitting on the low parapet or leaning over it watching the river running like a golden tide under the sunset rays. The farther shore was taking on

a soft purple haze out of which gleamed pin-points of yellow light, while behind, the outline of the hills grew more and more sharply defined against the clear, faintly-tinted sky.

“Hullo!” said Jackie, turning at the sound of Eve’s voice. “*Sittez-vous ici*. Josey, move up a bit. Isn’t it a ripping evening!” she sighed in a sort of ecstasy as she turned back to the river again.

“It never looks so nice in the day-time,” said Eve, in a matter-of-fact voice. “When the tide’s out it’s simply a beastly mudbank, and anyhow, it’s a potty little river. You should see——”

“Eve,” interrupted Josey solemnly, “you really don’t deserve to be a Lestholme girl. Who wants to see your hateful American rivers! It’s vulgar to run to size as you do. *This* is the highway of nations—the water-way of the world!” She waved her hand majestically and a chorus of ironical applause from the other white-robed forms hanging over the parapet rewarded her efforts.

“Go it, Josey,” called Molly O’Neill. “Sure and isn’t it the sweetest river in the world, barring the dear old Liffey?”

“Well, if *you’re* satisfied,” grinned Eve. “Olwen, keep your eyes off the Welsh hills, kid. It makes her homesick,” she explained in a loud aside as she pulled

her feet up on the wall and clasped her hands round her ankles.

"I'd love to push you over," Jackie remarked. "You couldn't save yourself if I did—but I won't do it, on second thoughts."

"What are those lights down the river?" asked Olwen.

"American liner," Eve answered slowly, staring at them. "I believe it's the *Dragon*, dear old beast. I generally look up the American sailings in the Library. She's too big to go into dock," she explained to Olwen, "so she has to berth up the river."

"Keep your eyes off American liners, kid," quoted Josey, with a suddenly acquired American accent. "It makes her homesick," she explained solemnly to the others. Eve grinned at her amiably.

"Sure thing," she agreed. "Well, to change the subject, what about this window business? Don't you think Shirley will be wanting to hold a House Meeting over it? She'll surely be wanting Tredennings to come romping in at the head of the subscription list."

Molly edged nearer to the group. "Is it the window you're talking about?" she asked. "I was thinking, all the time the Head was standing there looking like an angel, I don't know how *I'm* going to collect any money. Everybody I know in Ireland is so poor."

“ And I’m sure *we* are,” chimed in Jackie. “ Poor Mummie’s doing all she can to get the estates fairly clear by the time Tony comes of age, but what with death duties and taxes——”

“ When our elders get together,” complained Josey, “ they talk of nothing *but* death duties and taxes and the iniquity of the Government—any old Government, it doesn’t matter which.”

“ And I’m sure *I* haven’t any money,” the general confession encouraged Olwen to remark.

“ I can’t honestly say the same,” sighed Eve. “ You’d know I wasn’t speaking the truth if I did. It does seem so vulgar to have such pots of money. Pops would just love to give the Memorial window if you’d let him; but, of course, Miss Travers would make me feel a worm if I suggested it.”

“ Of course he couldn’t give it,” said Jackie. “ This is a very particular and private affair, and we couldn’t let a foreigner—sorry, Eve.”

“ What about me then?” challenged Eve indignantly.

“ You’re half English and your father isn’t,” Jackie pronounced, “ however nice he is,” she added as an afterthought.

“ I haven’t a drop of English blood in my veins,” Molly declared with uncalled-for jubilation, “ but I’m Lestholme, and look here, can’t we do something on

our own? Does Olwen know about the play?" she asked.

"No. I was going to tell her, but you can. Go on, Molly," nodded Eve.

"Well, this is the way it is then, Olwen. Some of us have been practising up a play—a ripping, original play, my dear—at night, on No Man's Land, before Lights Out. You know Eve told you to send me up one night? Well, it was for that."

"I see. Well, are you going to give it then sometime?"

"That's just what I've been thinking," continued Molly. "Couldn't we work it up for the Fête? The Head said she wanted side shows. It's short."

There was a chorus of indignant protest and Jackie exclaimed in horror.

"Great Scott! What an *awful* idea! And what *cheek* to think we could. Molly O'Neill, I always thought you were cracked—now I know."

"Most sensible thing she's ever suggested," Eve laughed. "I want to get June for Queen Elizabeth—the lady had tawny hair, hadn't she? I don't want Adeleine, so we'll have to be careful to get June to act without her beloved. Olwen, I wonder what you——"

"Me? Oh, indeed, but I couldn't ever act anything.

Oh, goodness me, whatever, as Marget would say, it is enough to give me nightmare!"

The others laughed and someone started talking about the lectures the Head was giving to the Fifth, and Eve gave a sigh of relief. She did not see, herself, how anyone so shy as Olwen could possibly be any good for her play, but she had not wanted her to feel left out—she was rather a care!

The "storm in a tea-cup", as Jackie appropriately named the Dining-hall incident, had died down as such things do, though Adeleine and her friends pointedly ignored Olwen whenever possible. And Shirley had spoken to Olwen very seriously about the inadvisability of letting your temper get the mastery over you so that you make a scene and a very unpleasant pool of tea for other people to endure.

"I know; I'm sorry, Shirley," Olwen stammered unhappily.

"It was bad form of Adeleine to rag you like that, and I've given her a good talking to for it, but it was dreadfully stupid of you to show her she had hurt you. And it's equally bad form of you to lose your temper publicly," said Shirley magisterially.

"It wasn't all *temper*," Olwen explained, "She—I—of course, it seemed silly, but I was afraid I was going to *cry*. That would have been awful."

She looked so woe-begone at the idea that Shirley laughed.

“It would have been unspeakable,” she agreed.

“Worse than temper,” Olwen decided, with a sudden gleam of amusement in her dark, tragic eyes. “If I’d burst out sobbing what would they have done?”

“I shudder to think,” Shirley replied solemnly. “For goodness sake don’t let it ever happen.”

“It won’t if I can help it, indeed,” said Olwen earnestly, “but sometimes it comes.”

“Funny kid,” Shirley had thought as Olwen shut the door behind her. “She’s frightfully keyed up and nervous. I wonder if she works too hard? Well, if Eve and Co. can’t make her slack off a bit no one can.”

CHAPTER VII

“I can't find my Notes”

Miss Travers' course of lectures to the Upper and Lower Fifth on the Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century was drawing to a close. The girls were sorry, because they had enjoyed them, but a great many were still more sorry because the Head had said she expected an essay on the subject from every girl who had attended the lectures. For the best essay she had promised a set of George Eliot, a prize that was so worth while, that even the non-workers looked interested.

“And girls,” she had said with emphasis, “I want an essay based on what you have heard during the course, not something you have crammed up at the last minute in the Library. You are to rely entirely on your own notes and your memories. I want to see how you can listen.”

“And if you haven't got either notes or memory, what then?” groaned Adeleine that evening over the tea-table.

“ You *have* got your notes,” June laughed. “ I’m sorry about your memory.”

“ Notes!” chimed in Elsie bitterly. “ If they’re like mine, a fat lot she’ll make of them. I can’t read my own writing half the time, and when I can I don’t know what they mean.”

“ Of course Olwen will come romping in with the best essay ever produced by a Lestholme girl,” Adeleine said, with a scornful glance in her direction. “ I expect she’s got stacks of notes. You could see her bent double over her book and scribbling as if her life depended on it.”

“ It *is* rather rough on the rest of us,” Jackie agreed gravely. “ I think she ought to be handicapped—I say,” she cried, quite elated by her own suggestion, “ isn’t that a brilliant idea? Handicap the brainy girls to give us poor wretches a chance.”

“ Do make Jackie stop,” whispered Olwen to Eve. “ Isn’t it dreadful of her to say things like that.”

Eve laughed. “ Well, it’s true,” she said.

“ I wouldn’t mind so much,” Adeleine was saying, “ if we could please ourselves whether we wrote an essay or not—I know which I’d do.”

“ I dare say the Head will never read it,” June consoled her. “ You’ll never make me believe she’s going to wade through all that pile of essays—life isn’t long

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enough, at any rate a term isn't. So cheer up; do your best and trust to luck."

"I never have any. She'd pitch on mine as a horrid example."

"I wish we hadn't to do it just now," Olwen said in a low tone. "There's such a lot of other things I want extra time for and somehow——"

Eve looked at her. "Got a headache again?"

Olwen nodded as she passed her cup for more tea, and refused the cake her neighbour offered her. Eve frowned at the tablecloth.

After prep that night Eve dragged Olwen down to a quiet part of the garden. "Look here, Olwen," she said. "I want to talk to you. I've been watching you at prep. I shan't know my history to-morrow at all. Aren't your eyes bad?"

"My head aches, I told you," Olwen answered evasively.

"Yes, but I saw you holding your book first one way and then the other as if you couldn't see. Don't be a silly ass! What's the good of going on like that? Now own up, aren't your eyes bad?"

Olwen twisted her hands together nervously. "They have never been very good," she said, "and now of course I try them more. But it's all right, Eve, indeed."

"Indeed and indeed," Eve mocked, pulling her on

to a garden seat under a pergola of crimson rambler. “ It’s all wrong. Doesn’t anyone look after you at all, Olwen?”

“ Of course,” Olwen said defensively. “ Marget is always very good but she doesn’t know, and she would never think of such a thing at all. And the Vicar, he’s my guardian, but *he* wouldn’t think either—and there’s no one else.”

“ I think it’s awful,” Eve said indignantly, staring at Olwen’s troubled face with its tired, heavy eyes. “ I’m just going to see the Head.”

“ You’re *not!*” Olwen clutched her arm with both hands. “ Why should you go and see the Head, Eve Latimer? It’s my business and they’re *my* eyes, whatever,” she finished with a nervous little laugh, as if she was afraid she had sounded too cross.

“ But, Olwen, it’s too stupid. You ought to be wearing glasses, I’m sure you ought. You’ll be ruining your sight for good if you’re not careful.”

“ I shan’t. Anyhow, I can’t have the glasses now.”

“ Look here, is it because of money or anything? Because they needn’t cost much and I’d love—don’t get ratty—well, say, Pops would love to give them as part of the scholarship, you know.”

Olwen stiffened at once. “ Oh no, thank you, Eve,

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I couldn't take it. I—I'll never forgive you if you ask Mr. Latimer about it. The scholarship is quite enough——" She broke off suddenly, and it was Eve's turn to flush angrily.

"I must say I think you're very funny about it all, Olwen. After all, Pops isn't insulting you by giving the scholarship, and I'm sure I don't want to hurt your feelings. Only it seems very silly to me."

"I know," Olwen said penitently. "I'm frightfully touchy—Molly would say that's because I'm a Celt. And it's good of you to worry about me—only you mustn't want to give me everything you think I need. As Josey would say: 'It isn't *done!*'—and it certainly isn't, Eve dear."

"Well, if you won't let *us* get the glasses you ought to have them. Olwen, to please me, go and tell the Head or Matron."

Olwen shook her head. "It's not the money altogether, Eve. I expect it wouldn't ruin me, but it's this way; I'm so afraid if they sent me to an oculist I shouldn't be allowed to do so much reading, and I *must!* You see I've a lot to make up with not having had the right teaching."

"But——" began Eve again. Olwen gripped her arm.

"I have told you how important it is for me not to

lose time. I’m not an idiot and I promise I’ll go and see the doctor in the hols—there!”

“I don’t believe you’ll last out. You’re looking rotten.”

“I dreamt such a lot last night—it isn’t my eyes. I’ve promised to see a doctor in the hols, so will you promise not to say a word to anyone?”

“No, I’ll not promise anything,” said Eve decidedly. “I won’t tell yet, but if you get worse or—well, I don’t know, but I won’t promise.”

“I’ll never forgive you if you tell,” Olwen said with a flash in her eyes.

“I must put up with it then,” Eve said staring back at her. “I feel sort of responsible for you.”

“I don’t mean to be cross, because it’s awfully good of you to care,” Olwen said as they went slowly back to Tredennings. “I do want to last out to be a credit to the scholarship and the House.”

“And the Latimers,” laughed Eve, but Olwen did not smile.

“I want my note-book,” she said, as they got near the house. “I left it in the Form Room. You go on if you want to, and I’ll run and get it.”

“Oh, *do* chuck work for to-night,” Eve said impatiently. “Nothing would induce me to go slogging away after prep.”

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Olwen laughed. "I'm not really going to slog, only I want to look up something I just thought of before I forget."

"Oh Scott!" groaned Eve, "what is the good of talking to you when all the time your mind is on those beastly lectures!"

Olwen laughed again as she ran down the broad path to the School House and made her way to the Fifth Form Room. Everything was very quiet as she went up the corridor, but as she came to the Form Room door there was a sudden bang. She jumped violently; there was no doubt that her nerves were keyed up too high, and she frowned as she opened the door.

"Hallo!" said someone. "Oh, it's you, Olwen. I was just looking up my notes for the Head's essay business—rotten, isn't it?"

"I'd just as soon not have it to do," Olwen replied, wondering why Adeleine sounded so friendly all at once. Generally she did not think it worth while to speak to the Welsh girl. "I've come for my notes, too. I thought I could just glance over them now."

"Glancing's not much good for me," grumbled Adeleine in a muffled voice, the lid of her desk resting on her head as she turned over her papers.

"Whatever was that noise just now?" asked Olwen as she edged between two other desks to get to her own.

“I let my lid fall,” said Adeleine curtly.

Olwen slid on to her seat and opened her desk, then she gave a little exclamation and sat staring. “Someone’s been turning over my things,” she said.

Adeleine emerged from her desk and let the lid fall with a bang.

“Oh, don’t!” exclaimed Olwen, wincing as the noise seemed actually to strike on her aching head.

“Sorry, but that’s what I did just now—what you heard. Someone been at your desk? Oh, but they can’t have—besides, why should they?”

“They have,” repeated Olwen decidedly. “Look at this paper half dragged out and caught in the lock.”

Adeleine got up from her desk and sauntered to the door. “I expect you’re imagining it,” she said carelessly. “What should anyone go to your desk for? Have you lost anything?”

Olwen was looking in one book after another, turning over the pages, and then shaking the books by their covers—that most destructive of all processes.

“I can’t find my notes of the last lecture,” she said anxiously. “I took them on an odd sheet of paper this time and was going to copy them into my notebook.”

Adeleine paused with her hand on the door. “It’s

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awfully easy to lose an odd piece of paper. But it's sure to turn up."

Olwen sat back and frowned at her open desk. "I hope it will, because I'd made rather full notes as it was the last lecture. Of course I ought to remember it, but I was rather stupid that morning."

Adeleine gave a short laugh. "Actually coming down to our level! Oh, I expect it will be all right," she added easily and closed the door behind her.

Olwen sat for a minute or two thinking vaguely about the lecture and the last notes and wishing her head would not ache so much, when suddenly she said to herself, or something said to her: "Why did Adeleine bang her desk? She need not have done it. Suppose it was so that she could say that was what made the noise before. But suppose it had been someone else's desk before! Suppose——" Olwen began to tidy her books.

CHAPTER VIII

The Reading-glass

“ Olwen—a little present for you.”

Olwen looked up from her book as Eve dangled a little parcel in front of her. It was Saturday afternoon, and a party of girls had been down to the city to service in the Lady Chapel of the new Cathedral. It had been Olwen's first visit, and Jackie had insisted on taking her to stand in front of the “ Noble Women ” window where Margaret Braden's face shone out among the heroines.

“ Take it in,” she whispered, “ It's a Lestholme girl, and, what's more, a Tredennings girl and my mother was at school with her—isn't it thrilling!”

Olwen nodded. So thrilling that it brought a lump into the throat of the little Welsh girl. It was indeed a great thing to come to Lestholme, worth bearing with headaches, and with slights from Adeleine and Elsie. She couldn't help glancing round to see what Adeleine thought of the window; could she bear to look up at Margaret Braden if she had really taken that paper—a Tredennings girl!

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At the moment that she turned Adeleine was watching her with a curious expression in her eyes—could it possibly be with envy? As their eyes met Adeleine reddened, a deep angry flush, and Olwen turned away quickly; she felt as if she had seen something she was not meant to see. She had forgotten it soon afterwards when they went to a tea shop, but it came back to her mind again later.

“A present?” she smiled. She had had very few presents in her life.

“Yes, take it, do—and don’t throw it back at me, will you?”

“Indeed, I would not be so rude.”

“As Molly would say, ‘I wouldn’t put it past you’. I do love Molly’s Irish, don’t you? She gets worse here than she is at home, because she puts it on to make us laugh.” She had sunk to the grass at Olwen’s feet, for they were in the garden, and she watched her anxiously as she chattered.

“What *is* it? I can’t get the string off. There—oh, Eve!”

“Do you like it? I saw it in the optician’s window next to the tea-room. You see, you don’t have to hold it, you can rest it on the page and move it along as you read.”

Eve scrambled to her knees and took the reading

glass out of Olwen's hand and put it on the open book. "Now look. Doesn't it make it easier? Won't it help your eyes?"

"Oh, it's lovely, Eve. But you shouldn't! No, indeed, you shouldn't. Did it cost a very great deal?"

"*Will* you stop talking about money!" Eve said, half laughing, half threatening. "And how rude to ask how much a present cost!"

"It is dreadful," Olwen agreed, "but you are always doing things for me and I can't do anything——"

"Rats!" interrupted Eve prosaically. It always alarmed the part of her which was English, when Olwen let the part of *her* which was Celtic get the upper hand. "Can you sew?" she inquired.

"Not awfully well. Why?"

Eve sat down on the grass again and clasped her hands round her knees. "It's my cloak for the play," she said thoughtfully. "We can get a good many things from the school property chest, but there's lots we can't, and we none of us seem very brainy over sewing. At least Anne sews bee-u-ti-fully, but, land's sake, she takes hours to do a seam. Kathleen's not bad, but she has a lot to do for herself, and I *can*, but I hate needlework."

"Oh, I can do enough for that," Olwen said eagerly. "You tell me what you want done. No, it won't hurt

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my eyes—I shan't do fine stitches—you won't want them for that. It'll help me to try and remember that last lecture. I can't find the notes."

There was something in her tone that made Eve glance up at her. Olwen was playing with the reading-glass and did not meet her eyes.

"Haven't you found them yet? It's awfully funny, because if anyone had picked them up she would have returned them."

Olwen did not answer and Eve looked up again. "Olwen, what's the matter? You don't think anyone has got them, do you?"

"I feel sure someone has taken them," Olwen said quietly. "I am ever so careful over my things, I couldn't lose them like that."

"But—I say, Olwen, that's a frightful thing to say. Do you know—do you *think* you know who it is?"

"I feel nearly sure. But, of course, I'm not going to say because—it seems impossible. After all, it's only one lecture, but it happens to be one I felt muddled over. But perhaps I shan't be much worse off."

"I don't suppose you will—but it's such a horrid feeling," Eve said slowly.

It *was* a horrid feeling. However much Olwen tried to put it out of her mind it was continually cropping up, and she found that it added considerably to her

work to try and reconstruct that lecture from memory alone. She was working very hard, for there were so many things she was supposed to have learned that she really did not know, that she was doing a good deal of extra reading to fill the gaps.

The reading-glass Eve had given her was a tremendous help. Whether it was really good for her eyes she did not know, but it lessened the strain for the time being.

There was no doubt that Adeleine, from being merely indifferent to Olwen, was now actively antagonistic to her. There were continual little pin-pricks that made Olwen, sensitive and proud as she was, miserable and angry.

But it was more than a pin-prick the night when Miss Carstairs was taking prep, and Adeleine deliberately drew her attention to Olwen's reading-glass. It was a fascinating little gadget, and the girls at either side of Olwen, a Courtenays and a Faraday girl respectively, kept glancing at it as Olwen moved it down the page. It happened to be botany that Olwen was studying, and there was a floral diagram that certainly took on alarming proportions when seen side-ways through the glass—it looked like a grotesque human face.

Doreen of Courtenays was always a giggler, and she

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gave a surreptitious dig behind Olwen at the back of Connie Dale of Faraday.

"Old Jobson," she whispered, nodding at the diagram.

Olwen frowned and moved the glass, but not before Adeleine, two desks away, had leant towards her and dropped a ruler at the same time. Miss Carstairs looked up and saw three people staring at Olwen and smiling.

"What are you doing, Adeleine?" asked Miss Carstairs, and Adeleine sat up and looked demure. "Olwen, what are you playing with?"

"It's only a glass, Miss Carstairs."

"You've no business to have anything of that sort now. Put it away at once—at once," Miss Carstairs repeated as Olwen hesitated. Olwen put the glass in her desk and went on with her work, but not before she had caught an indignantly sympathetic glance from Eve.

When they came out of prep Eve was wildly indignant. "What a beastly trick," she said. "She did that on purpose to get you into trouble."

"I thought so too," said Olwen. "I shall ask her."

"You were an awful ass not to tell Miss Carstairs you needed the glass."

"And have her tell Matron, and perhaps—oh I can't have all that fuss. You promised, Eve."

"I didn't," Eve flashed back. "I said I'd wait, that's all."

Adeleine was going along the broad path with June and Doreen when Olwen met her and, for once, Olwen was too angry to feel shy. She stopped dead in front of the three girls, and suddenly her old suspicion of Adeleine came uppermost in her mind.

"Adeleine, I want to speak to you, please," she said.

"Oh, you can't," June said, dragging Adeleine by her arm, "we're going to Courtenays before curfew."

"Well, Adeleine can catch you up."

"Can't you say what you've got to now?" asked Doreen.

Adeleine gave a little laugh and dropped the other girls' arms. "Go on, you two," she said. "I'll catch you up when Olwen has got this off her mind. Well, what is it?" she asked sharply, as the others went ahead grumbling.

"I want to know where my notes are," Olwen blurted out.

"Your notes?" Adeleine stared blankly, she had not expected this. "What notes? Do you mean those you said you'd lost—the lecture?"

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“ You know I mean that.” Olwen was trembling now. She hoped Adeleine would not notice.

“ I tell you what I do know,” said Adeleine angrily. “ I never heard of such cheek. The idea of thinking I’ve got your notes.”

“ But you had been to my desk,” persisted Olwen. “ I heard it bang.”

“ I told you it was mine banged. I haven’t got your notes.” Adeleine paused. “ I don’t even know where they are,” she added deliberately, and somehow Olwen believed her.

“ I’m sorry,” she stammered, feeling that she had been put in the wrong, and yet being certain that she was right. It sounds complicated, and it was!

“ I should think so,” said Adeleine, and with a contemptuous glance she went to join the others who were waiting at Courtenays front door.

“ What on earth did she want?” inquired June.

“ She’s lost her notes of the last lecture of the Head’s and she wanted to know if I’d seen them at all,” said Adeleine easily.

“ Gracious!” ejaculated Doreen. “ But why *you*? And why the mystery?”

Adeleine shrugged her shoulders indifferently. “ Oh, she’s potty! I believe she really thinks I may have picked them up somewhere because—didn’t I tell you?

I happened to be in the Form Room when she first found she'd lost them. Of course I sympathized with her, as anyone would, and said I'd look out for them. But it's so stupid to ask me if I've found them, as if I wouldn't give them to her at once. I'm afraid I nearly bit her head off."

June gave her a sudden keen glance—something did not ring true and she felt uneasy. Adeleine had never mentioned the loss of the notes before, and she had talked a good deal about the essay.

"I hope she'll find them," she said slowly, as they went into Courtenays. "It's so uncomfortable for everyone when things are lost."

Olwen went on to the playing fields, where she was due for a cricket practice, feeling rather bewildered. She had been so sure that Adeleine had taken the notes, and now she was equally sure that the girl did not know where they were.

"Hallo!" called Eve from the seat under the beech trees. "I've been waiting for you." She jumped up and went to meet her. "I saw you talking to Adeleine and I didn't dare barge in. What did she say about the glass? I hope you told her what you thought of her."

"The glass?" said Olwen vaguely.

"Goodness me, yes, the glass!" cried Eve. "What else?"

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“ I forgot all about it,” confessed Olwen, biting her lips in dismay. “ Indeed I did, then.”

“ But——” Eve stared in astonishment. “ That’s what you went for. You silly cuckoo! What on earth did you talk about then? Did you go and ask her if she liked the hot weather?”

Olwen laughed ruefully. “ I—I—we talked about the essay,” she said hesitatingly. “ I asked her if she’d seen my notes.”

“ Of all the idiotic things! You’ve got those notes on the brain.”

“ I wish I had, indeed,” murmured Olwen. Eve shook her arm viciously.

“ To go and talk about them to a girl who’s trying to be disagreeable! Haven’t you any spunk, Olwen Lloyd-Evans?”

“ I wonder,” sighed Olwen.

CHAPTER IX

Queer Tales

"I suppose," said Monica, "that you've heard the queer tales that are going about the House?"

Shirley raised her eyes from her book and looked at Monica, who was tightening the screws of her racket press. Laurel West, who in virtue of her post as editor of "The Rag", was allowed a corner of the prefects' room when editorial duties were pressing, looked up too.

"I'm always hearing queer tales—what's this one, Monica?"

"Rather a disconnected affair. People are seeing a white figure stealing about in the middle of the night——"

"What were those people doing to be able to see the white-robed figure?" asked Shirley. "They ought to have been asleep. Who saw it?"

"Several girls on the upper landing. They're rather shy of saying much because they were evidently sky-

larking, but they were hanging over the stairs—you know, where you can look down into the Hall—and they saw someone white gliding along. It seems to have been quite the orthodox sort of thing and it passed out of sight in the way spooks do.”

“Rummy!” said Shirley thoughtfully. “I suppose most schools have a ghost tale sooner or later, but I wonder what started this one.”

“When was it?” asked Laurel.

“Oh, the night we were at the Head’s—two nights ago, wasn’t it?”

Shirley was looking at Laurel. “Why?” she asked.

“Because you know the attaché case I keep on the shelf in the Common Room with a lot of magazine papers and things in? Well, someone made hay of it two nights ago.”

“What in creation for? Have you lost anything?”

“I don’t think so. There wasn’t anything anyone else could want. Only it *had* been turned upside down.”

“You mean the ghost did it?” asked Monica.

Laurel laughed. “I don’t mean anything. It’s just a coincidence and I don’t see any sense in it.”

Monica yawned as she put her racket on the bookshelf. “There’s always some little worry cropping up,” she said indifferently.

“If you want worries, edit a school mag,” suggested

Laurel. "By the way, Olwen has sent in some quite good verses on the American liners lying up the river."

"Poems on them! Mercy, what a subject!" laughed Shirley.

"Yes, but she's done it well—she makes you see them lying there in the dusk." (Laurel, as the daughter of "Brayton Miles" the novelist, was the literary critic of Lestholme.) "It's an unusual sort of writing. I wonder what Father will think of it when I send him the 'Rag'."

"She's quite brainy enough," said Monica.

"Yes. I should say she's too many brains for her nerves—awfully jumpy kid," said Shirley.

"I believe she has had a hard time of it," Laurel put in quietly.

"Here, do you mean?" asked Shirley.

"I wasn't meaning that exactly. I meant all her life. I talked to her a bit about it once. She won't say much, but evidently her mother was ill for years and Olwen had to look after her, and since then she's pretty well looked after herself. Rather rough on a kid, isn't it?"

"I know," Shirley nodded her head reflectively. "And she's so fearfully anxious to do well here. Feels it's such a responsibility to be the first scholarship girl."

"Of course Adeleine makes it as rough as she can," Monica said. "She's perfectly hateful. I can't think why June is such a slave to her, because really June herself is quite a decent girl."

"Oh, she's fearfully impressed with Adeleine's superior air," laughed Shirley. "Adeleine can put it over! But I tell you what, Eve Latimer has been sporting. The way she's looked after Olwen has been splendid, because they really didn't seem to have much in common at first."

"Eve is sporting all through," Laurel said. "She'll be really fine one day if too much money doesn't spoil her. You know, though, Adeleine isn't as bad as she paints herself."

"She's an arrant little snob," Monica declared.

"Oh yes, she's all that, and she began by taking a superior attitude to Olwen and she's had to keep it up. And one thing leads to another, and she can't get out of a vicious circle."

Shirley and Monica looked at one another and laughed.

"Psycho-analysis, Laurel?" suggested Shirley.

"It's the truth, that's all," smiled Laurel, bending over her papers.

"Shall you tell Miss Carstairs?" asked Monica.

"What about? The ghost? No; what's the good?

We must just keep our ears and eyes open. It may be pure imagination. Once let some girls get hold of an idea of that sort and they have no end of weird experiences—I suppose they really do happen? *I* don't know. Besides, Miss Carstairs is frightfully nervy herself, you know; she'd never sleep a wink."

"Right-o," agreed Monica, walking over to the window. "I'm going across to Faraday to see their folk-dancing. Anybody coming?"

"I'll come with you," said Shirley, shutting her book with a sigh of resignation. "First you *will* talk, and then you go and upset my mind so that it can't function properly."

Monica laughed. "Sorry," she said. "but you've got to be told things. Come along, old thing."

Miss Carstairs had just gone into the Head's sitting-room when the two prefects went past talking and laughing on their way to Faraday.

"Nice girls," she said aloud thoughtfully, as she stood by the window watching them before dropping into the big chair the Head had drawn up.

"Your two prefects?" asked Miss Travers. "Yes, they are. I think Tredennings is very fortunate just now. By the way, how does Olwen Lloyd-Evans get on in the House? Well?"

"Fairly, I think. Eve Latimer has chummed up

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with her in a way that rather surprises me, I must confess, and as Eve's friend, things have been much easier for her. Otherwise, I'm afraid she'd have had rather a lonely time. She's a strange sort of girl—shy and self-conscious, and I should think rather difficult. You couldn't imagine her laughing and talking nonsense like the Vanes for instance."

"No, poor child, I think her life has been far too serious for that—she *is* too serious. I wonder if she is happy?"

"Oh, I think so—in her way. But I don't think she looks very well."

"No, I thought the same. I hope she isn't working too hard. She is so dreadfully anxious over her work that I hope she won't overdo it."

"Oh, that reminds me, Miss Travers," broke in Miss Carstairs, leaning forward to put a book on the table. "You asked me to get you this book out of the Library the other day and I've kept forgetting to bring it."

Miss Travers picked it up. "Oh yes—'Women Writers of the Victorian Age' by Parsons, isn't it? Thank you. I don't really need it, as I told you, only I don't want it left in the Library while the Fifth is in the throes of essay writing. I don't think any of them would consult it after what I said, but it *might* be a

temptation to a girl who had not been very attentive, and I want to see how far they are capable of taking in lectures."

"I hope you won't get too many shocks," said Miss Carstairs drily.

"Oh well, it will be good practice for them, at any rate. Now, don't hurry away, I've been wanting to hear about your sister. Is she better?"

For the next half-hour Lestholme and its affairs were pushed into the background while Miss Carstairs unburdened her troubles to her chief, who sat leaning forward over her table, her hands lightly clasped in front of her and her whole attention given to her visitor. So absorbed were they, that when Miss Travers moved suddenly and sent 'Parsons' on to the floor, with a bang, they both jumped.

"Oh, how stupid—my elbow caught it," exclaimed the Head as Miss Carstairs retrieved the book and replaced it on the table. "Thank you, and that paper fell out of it, Miss Carstairs, if you would be kind enough——"

Miss Carstairs handed the paper to the Head and went back to her chair while Miss Travers went on with what she had been saying. As she finished, her eyes fell to the paper she still held in her hand and she glanced over it idly. Suddenly her expression changed

and she turned it over and looked at the other side. Then she bit her lip and frowned.

“ I’m too late, it seems,” she said gravely.

“ Too late?” repeated Miss Carstairs.

“ Yes, someone had thought of this book before I did. The last girl I should have thought of, too.”

“ Oh dear, I *am* sorry. Who is it? Not one of mine, I hope?”

“ Olwen Lloyd-Evans,” said the Head quietly. “ These are the notes of the last lecture, and she has begun a rough outline of her essay on the other side. It has her name on—besides I know her writing. I am very sorry.”

Miss Carstairs eyes were full of dismay. “ What shall you do?” she said after another little silence.

Miss Travers sighed and slipped the paper into her desk. “ I don’t know yet,” she said. “ Frankly, I would rather it had been almost anyone else, because so much depends on the poor child’s success here. I am only so afraid that that is just the explanation—she was too anxious. I must think what to do.”

CHAPTER X

“Will you try my Voice?”

Olwen was sitting by the Common Room window stitching at a cloak for one of the courtiers in Laurel's play, with a book propped up in front of her. She had watched the prefects go down to Faraday, and Miss Carstairs go up to the Head, and every now and then she stopped her work and stared, not at the book, nor at the passers-by, but out over the lawns at something no one else could see.

She was thinking about Eve and wishing, as she often did, that she could do something to make Eve proud of being her friend. She felt as if Eve must always be explaining her friendship with a girl who was so different from the rest of them. If only there was something—something she could do for the Fête perhaps!

And there came a sudden flash of memory. She remembered the local Eisteddfod in the little Welsh village. The Vicar, who was very musical, had made her sing to him one day in the little empty church, to

his organ accompaniment. When she had finished he turned round on the organ stool and looked at her gravely. She remembered what he had said.

"You are a fortunate girl, indeed, Olwen. You have had a very great gift bestowed on you."

He had made her sing this song at the Eisteddfod, and, strangely enough, she was not the least little bit nervous when she began to sing. She remembered the pause in the crowded hall when she had finished her song and then the roar of applause that followed. The Vicar had not let her give the encore that was demanded, and she had never sung in public again. She had an idea that Marget had not approved! It was decided to leave the question of voice-training for the present—"because there isn't money or time to train both my mind *and* my voice," Olwen had declared gravely, "and my mind is the most important."

She took up her sewing again, but in a few minutes it was down on her knees and a red spot was flaming on each cheek. Then she rolled up the cloak and jumped up and put it at the back of the book-case—she had made her resolution.

She was due for a music lesson from Miss Woods at four o'clock, and now she was on pins to get there; but it was still a little too early, so she wandered down to the playing fields, avoiding the tennis courts where

Eve was dealing her most deadly American service to the utter undoing of Barbie Bedale.

A group of Malevers children, having a grand argument at one end of the field, caught sight of her and waited for her approach.

“There aren’t such things as ghosts, are there?” burst out a small straight-haired person with glasses, who was Sara, Dorothy Burton’s sister.

Olwen shook her head decidedly. “Of course not,” she said, with the authority of a Fifth Former.

“But you’ve got one at Tredennings,” Celia declared. “My sister Adeleine says so. I heard her telling Maud Burns, who takes our music practice. Maud said, ‘Hush—the kids!’ but I had heard, so she was too late. Have you seen it?”

“No,” said Olwen. She had forgotten all about that story, but it gave her a nasty, creepy feeling now she remembered. She hoped she never *would* see it!

“I would like to see a ghost, a real live one,” Jean Armstrong said thoughtfully.

“Oo—oh, *I* wouldn’t!” half a dozen others broke in hurriedly.

“None of you could see one, because there’s no such thing,” Olwen said firmly.

“But my sister Adeleine——”

“Yes, her sister *saw* someone all in white gliding

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along, and it just vanished clean away, didn't it, Celia?"

"M'm!" nodded Celia round-eyed. "So it must have been a ghost, mustn't it. She says they do have queer things at Tredennings!"

"Do we?" said Olwen rather amused. "What else do we have?"

"Adeleine said you'd a scholarship girl that the American girl's father had sent. She said the American girl had taken her up and made a fuss over her—felt she had to, she s'posed, 'cos she wasn't her sort and she must have been bored stiff. She told Maud—what?"

Jean had given her a dig with her elbow and met her astonished stare with such a meaning frown that Celia floundered, went crimson, and finally came to a full stop with embarrassing suddenness.

"I—I'm sorry," she stammered awkwardly. "Are you the scholarship? I'd forgotten."

"It doesn't matter," Olwen reassured her, trying to smile naturally.

"Did you pass an exam to get the scholarship?" inquired Sara.

"Of course."

"Then I expect you're frightfully brainy, and Adeleine Vestron is jealous of you," Sara nodded wisely. "Celia is rather a jealous girl, so I expect it's in the family."

Celia being for a minute speechless with indignation, Olwen seized the opportunity to make her escape, and the words that flowed from Celia when she recovered the power of speech, covered her retreat.

She made her way across the fields towards Faraday wondering if what Adeleine had said was really true. *Was* Eve bored by her? Something stinging came into her eyes, and she blinked nervously. She stumbled over a tuft of grass as she skirted the tennis courts, and a shrill call made her look up. Eve was waving her racket.

“Coo-ee! Where are you going?”

“Music lesson,” Olwen called back and waved a greeting. She wondered if Eve was relieved that she was not going to join them. It was dreadful to think that she might be spoiling the whole term for her and that all Lestholme knew it!

Miss Woods, the senior music mistress, was sitting at her piano playing softly to herself when Olwen entered the Music Room at Faraday.

“Well, Olwen,” she said, smiling as she looked up, “you might have been sitting on the doorstep waiting for the clock to strike.”

Olwen smiled absently. Her mind was so full of what she had to say that she could think of nothing else. She felt it would be impossible to go through

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a music lesson till she had settled the matter.

"I really *have* been waiting for the clock to strike because I wanted to ask you something, Miss Woods," she said nervously.

"Yes?" said Miss Woods encouragingly, as the girl came to a dead stop. "What is it, Olwen? Nothing wrong, is there?"

"No, not exactly," Olwen replied, putting her music on the top of the piano. "It's—I don't know how to put it. It sounds so conceited."

"My dear girl," said Miss Woods with good-natured impatience, "what a lot of time you waste in coming to the point! It won't sound any better for making such a long business of it."

Olwen really did not know how to begin, but she made a desperate effort. "Please, Miss Woods, would you mind hearing me sing?" she stammered.

Miss Woods dropped her hands from the key-board to her knees and stared in amused astonishment.

"Why, Olwen, I thought you told me you couldn't sing? I remember I didn't try your voice because of something—I forget what. And later on you told me you *couldn't* sing."

"I didn't say I couldn't, Miss Woods, really. I wanted you to think I couldn't, I know; but I said I *didn't* then. I haven't sung all term, but——"

“Look here, my dear. You’re wasting your time and mine too. What is all this mysterious beginning of sentences for? What made you act an untruth to me, and why do you want to take it back now?”

“I never thought of it that way—I’m sorry. I didn’t want to have to spend time on singing because I wanted every minute for my other lessons. But now I want to do something for—the Fête, and I wondered if you’d think I could sing.”

If Miss Woods had been surprised before, she was absolutely astounded now. Olwen’s conceit in offering herself as a soloist seemed so abnormal that she suspected that it was not conceit at all, but the very absence of it, that made her offer her voice as an impersonal gift.

“You mayn’t think I’m good enough,” Olwen was saying anxiously, “but the Vicar, Mr. Rhys, you know, thought my voice was more than ordinary.”

Miss Woods gasped. “I’ll try you, of course,” she said rather vaguely, “but—Come and stand here. Now—”

At the end of five minutes Miss Woods eyes were no longer vague, and her cheeks were flushed. She made no comment for the moment but reached her hand to the music stand and picked up a volume of ballads.

“Can you sing ‘All through the Night’?” she asked

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with a curious repressed excitement in her quiet voice.

"Yes, I know it quite well," Olwen said, and soon the plaintive notes were filling the room with their haunting melody. When the last sound had died away, the music mistress sat silent for a minute, then she turned round on her stool and looked at the girl standing anxiously expectant beside her.

"Olwen!" she said. "How *dare* you say you didn't sing? How dare anyone with a voice like that deny the gift?"

Olwen drew a long breath of relief. "You think it's all right then, Miss Woods? You think I could do something for the Fête?" she asked anxiously.

"Oh the *Fête*! I wasn't thinking about *that*!" Miss Woods waved an impatient hand. "You're too young and untrained to sing in public——"

"Oh!" Olwen gave an exclamation of dismay.

"My dear child, I've never yet met any girl so anxious to make a sensation. Why are you so determined to shine in public?"

There was a moment's silence, then Olwen decided to take Miss Woods into her confidence.

"It's not for myself," she said simply. "It's because I'm the Latimer scholarship girl and Eve has been very good to me—I've nothing I can do for her and nothing I can do for Lestholme, and nothing I can give. I once

got a prize, when I was quite small, for singing at an Eisteddfod and I remembered that, and thought perhaps I could sing at the Fête, and Eve would——”

“Would what?” asked Miss Woods.

“Well,” Olwen said, with a little quiver in her voice, “I don’t know how to say it without being what Josey calls ‘soppy’—but don’t you see, Miss Woods, that it is dreadful to be always taking and never, never being able to give anything? Please, couldn’t you train me to sing something—just *one* thing and let it be a surprise to everyone?”

“It’s not at all a bad idea,” Miss Woods said gently, as Olwen bit her lip and blinked that stinging feeling out of her eyes. “It must be something quite simple, you know——”

“And you won’t tell anyone what I have said, will you, please? And not about my singing? I wouldn’t wish to do it unless you thought it was good enough.”

“No, we’ll keep your secret, only of course we must consult Miss Travers, but no one else. And we must arrange to have your lessons when everyone is out—if there is such a time,” Miss Woods smiled at her encouragingly, and Olwen sighed again as the tension relaxed.

“Oh, it is very good of you, indeed,” she said earnestly. “I will try very hard.”

CHAPTER XI

June is Uneasy

Things had not been going very well with Adeleine lately. As a matter of fact she put everything down to the score of Olwen Lloyd-Evans—since she had come nothing had gone right! No longer could the Fifth Form take matters easily unless they wished to be publicly contrasted with this newcomer, who, not content with studying in proper places and at proper times, was putting up an unfair competition.

And, instead of resenting such an innovation, half of the nicest girls at Tredennings admitted her into their innermost circle. And it was a strange fact that, though the Vane twins were the most friendly, happy-go-lucky of mortals, yet it was not everybody that they admitted—Adeleine herself had never been more than “one of the others”.

It had annoyed Adeline very much to see Olwen, as she expressed it, “run by Eve and the Bob-tail”. She couldn’t understand it, for the simple reason that *she*

would never have sacrificed herself for a shy, lonely girl.

This particular afternoon she was coming through the gardens with June, and she was in a thoroughly bad temper. For one thing, she had been trying to write the Literature essay and her mind seemed to be a perfect blank on the subject, and the few things she did know about women writers did not seem to be the things she had heard in the lecture.

And when she had delicately hinted to June that it was ridiculous not to pool their resources, seeing those resources were so small, June had looked surprised and had evaded the question. Even June was not quite satisfactory lately.

"You wouldn't get much help from me," she said awkwardly. "I'm making a fearful hash of it. Besides, we aren't to help each other. Come on, let's go down to the river walk."

It was a thing she could hardly resent, but it made Adeleine feel as if she had been definitely snubbed, and as if somehow June had not thought quite so well of her. And then they had strolled down to the terrace in an embarrassed silence, each of them trying to think of something to talk about. There was no one else on the terrace just then, and June sat on the parapet and yawned ostentatiously. Adeleine, by her side,

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knelt with one knee on the wall and threw little pebbles across the road into the water. At least the aim was the water, but often enough they did not reach farther than the road.

"You needn't think," Adeleine burst out at last, "that I want to cheat. I haven't a ghost of a chance of getting the prize, and I don't believe you have either."

"Not an earthly," June agreed promptly.

"Well then, I think it would do us a lot more good—and it wouldn't hurt anyone else—to help each other, than to do rotten papers alone. Don't you think so?"

"That isn't the point, is it?" June said, staring over the river. "The Head just wants to know how we take in lectures and things. Stars! she will have a shock when she finds how I *don't* take them in."

"I think it's silly."

June had flushed, and she too picked up a pebble and threw it viciously across the road beneath. "Well, I don't think it would be straight to help each other, even if we did think it was a potty idea of the Head's. I'm not going in for anything that's not quite straight, Adeleine."

Adeleine stared. June had sounded very decided and her cheeks were very red; Adeleine could not make her out.

"I don't want you to," she said indignantly. "You needn't be so priggish. I can't think what's happened to you."

"There's nothing happened to me," June said. "Only once I got into a scrape over a thing—not quite like this, only when you said about not hurting anyone else—well, that's what we said then."

"We?" inquired Adeleine curiously.

"Yes—'we'. It was before your time and I'm not going to tell you any more about it. We owned up to Shirley when she came as Head of Tredennings, and started with a clean slate, but never again if I know it! I was so jolly uncomfortable over the business all the time and it wasn't worth it."

"H'm!" grunted Adeleine. "It sounds like a great fuss over nothing. Well, I don't care a toss about the essay and of course no one has a chance against Olwen."

"Well, she works hard enough," said June. "By the way, has she found those notes of the lecture yet—those she asked you about?"

"I've never asked her," Adeleine answered carelessly. "I never speak to the girl if I can help it—she gets on my nerves."

"I wonder if her sight is bad?" June continued thoughtfully.

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"I don't suppose so. Her people would make her wear glasses if it was."

"Because—I mean I was sorry for her over that glass at prep. If she really needs it, it was rather rough on her. You tried to make Miss Carstairs look at her, didn't you?"

"Goodness me, June, what on earth is the matter with you? Olwen was fiddling with that glass because Eve gave it to her that afternoon. It's only a toy."

"But you did try to get her into a row, you know you did," persisted June doggedly. "I think she looks as if her eyes ached—I feel sorry for her somehow."

"Oh!" Adeleine made an impatient movement. "I don't know anything about her and care less! I can't stand the way her voice goes up at the end of a sentence instead of down like sensible voices do!" She laughed and slipped her arm into June's. "Come along, old thing," she said amiably. "Let's go and do something."

As they went down to the garden again, Adeleine talked and laughed, and June listened more or less in silence. It was no longer she who followed Adeleine's lead, it was Adeleine who was now trying to win her favour, and she was conscious of a feeling of distrust and uneasiness that had been growing steadily during the last few days. There were so many things she could not understand, and what she *could* understand

made her indignant. She had even begun to see that they had been distinctly unfair in their treatment of Olwen and to feel that it was going to be very difficult to steer an even course between loyalty to her friend and justice to the Welsh girl.

She had left Adeleine, who was due at a tennis practice, and was on her way back to Tredennings when she met some Malevers girls, talking as usual as if they had only just met after a long separation and had so much to say. June laughed as two of them cannoned into her in their engrossment.

"Sorry!" said the foremost, who happened to be Celia Vestron.

"What on earth's the matter? Can't you see where you are going? What is the excitement?"

"We're looking for something Olwen Lloyd-Evans has lost," Celia said with importance.

"Oh indeed, are you? What do you kids know about Olwen?"

"Oh, quite a lot," Sara informed her, nodding her fair little head. "We often talk to her and we like her, don't we?" she asked, looking round at the others.

"Yes, rather, she's topping," came a murmured response. The others were rather shy of the big girl.

"I say, June," broke in Jean coaxingly, putting her hand on June's arm. "Do tell us about the ghost."

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"The——what rubbish, you silly infants! Is this what Olwen talks to you about?" she demanded. (It didn't sound like Olwen.)

"No. *She* said it was rubbish, but it was *her* sister was talking about it," Sara said, nodding at Celia to make a distinction between her pronouns.

"Adeleine!" exclaimed June unbelievably. "Adeleine never told you——"

"Not *us*! We heard her telling someone else. *She* doesn't like Olwen."

"You mind your own business, my little dears," advised June. "You're much too young to meddle with high politics."

"Yes, but, you know, Celia forgot Olwen was the scholarship girl and she went and let out to her all the things Adeleine had been saying."

"Oh, Sara, you beastly tell-tale!" shrieked Celia with crimson cheeks. "You know it was an accident and Olwen said she didn't mind at all and——"

June took hold of each of them by a shoulder and held them in a wrathful grip. "You little horrors!" she cried. "Just what *did* you tell Olwen? Shut up, Sara! It's Celia's turn. Get on, kid."

"It wasn't much," pouted Celia, darting baleful glances at Sara, "only that Adeleine told Maud that you had such queer girls at Tredennings and——"

"Yes, and you said," broke in Sara, as Celia slowed down, "you said that Eve——"

June shook her. "Let Celia speak for herself, Sara. What did you say about Eve, you little idiot?"

"I only told her Adeleine said something about Eve being bored with her, but taking her up because she was the scholarship. She did say it too," Celia finished defiantly.

"You're a priceless lot of meddlers," June informed them. "It's very mean and sneaky to repeat things you overhear. Don't you ever do it again. Run away and be good! What is it Olwen's lost?" she asked, over her shoulder as she released her prisoners and turned away.

"A magnifying-glass that she reads with," said Jean. "She dropped it out of the pocket of her blazer and she says it's very important. Can't she see well, June?"

"Don't know," answered June shortly. "I hope you'll find her glass anyhow. Goodbye!"

CHAPTER XII

“She says She Trusts Me!”

“Olwen Lloyd-Evans, the Head wants you.”

“Me?” Olwen stared at the Faraday girl who brought the message.

“Yes, hurry up, don’t keep her waiting.”

Olwen sighed as she set off to the Head’s. Everything seemed to go wrong. Her head ached; it nearly always did, and now she had lost her glass it ached more than ever. Now the nights were darker she carried books up to bed and woke up early to study. It was not a wise proceeding and did not help her eyes at all.

She could not think what Miss Travers could want her for. It was not likely to be a visitor this time, but it could not be anything more serious.

The Head, however, looked at her gravely as she motioned her to the chair by the window.

“I want to have a little talk with you, Olwen.”

“Yes, Miss Travers?”

But the Head did not begin her talk for a minute;

she turned over some papers and cast several keen glances at Olwen, whose eyes were looking over the lawns. She did not seem to have a guilty conscience.

“How are you getting on with the essay, Olwen?”

Olwen’s wistful gaze withdrew itself from the outside world and focused itself on the Head. “Not very well, Miss Travers.”

“I am sorry. How is that?”

Olwen brushed her hand across her forehead in an unconscious gesture of weariness. “I—I don’t know. I’ve lost my notes and I can’t remember.”

Miss Travers took up a paper and held it out. “Are these your notes?”

Olwen jumped up quickly and took the paper from Miss Travers’ outstretched hand.

“Yes, indeed they are,” she cried, flushing with delight. “Oh, please, where did you find the paper?”

“Can’t you imagine where it was?” Miss Travers asked quietly.

Olwen shook her head slowly. You weren’t, of course, supposed to answer Miss Travers like that, but neither of them noticed just then.

“I can’t,” she said. “I’ve hunted everywhere. I missed it out of my desk”—she stopped suddenly, then ended awkwardly. “I didn’t know where to look.”

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"You haven't, of course, been consulting any book in the Library?"

Olwen's eyes widened. "Why, no, Miss Travers. I thought you said not? I thought you wanted to see what we remembered."

"And yet your notes were found in the Library in a book on Mid-Victorian Women!" the Head said, and her eyes never left Olwen's face.

"Oh, but they couldn't—I mean—I——" Olwen stopped bewildered. She did not yet grasp the inference that could be made and was trying to imagine how her notes could possibly have got there.

"It seems," continues the Head evenly, "as though someone had been comparing the book and notes in a hurry, perhaps had been disturbed, and shut the paper in the book and had had no chance to get it back."

Olwen shook her head slowly again. Her mind was going over her interview with Adeleine—Adeleine, who, she felt sure, had been at her desk—Adeleine, who so surprisingly had said she did not even know where the notes were. Perhaps this was the explanation.

"What do you know about it, Olwen?" asked the Head.

She hesitated. After all, she did not really *know* anything—besides, you can't tell tales in school or out. The Head waited patiently.

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“I didn’t do it, Miss Travers, that’s all I can say. Someone took my notes.”

“You are making a very serious accusation, Olwen, unless you are quite sure. A girl who would do that is doing a worse thing than consulting an unauthorized book, so be certain it is not you, yourself, who left the notes where I found them.”

“I am *quite* certain, Miss Travers,” Olwen said firmly, with a slightly indignant tone in her voice. “I would never do a thing like that. I remember I told Eve I’d lost the notes. You could ask her, Miss Travers.”

“I’m not saying I don’t believe you, Olwen, but don’t you see that proves nothing? You might have lost your notes in that book—someone had.”

“Ye-es, I see.”

“Have you no idea how it may have happened?”

Again there was the quick flush and the hesitation. “I don’t *know* anything, Miss Travers, please. I only wonder about something, but I couldn’t say.”

“Very well, Olwen. I trust you. I don’t think you would do such a thing, but remember, in saying so I accuse some other girl of doing worse. I must think what to do about the matter.”

“Yes, Miss Travers. Please, might I have my notes?”

“Certainly. Take them with you. By the way, my

dear, you're not looking very well. Are you all right?"

"Quite, Miss Travers, thank you," Olwen said hastily. "I've just a little headache."

"Have you been worrying about your work at all?"

"Perhaps a little bit," Olwen smiled shyly. "And I've been worried about the notes. I seemed as if I *couldn't* remember."

"Yes. Well, you must take things a little more easily, Olwen. It is not every girl to whom I should say that, but I hear from all the mistresses how well you work, and I don't want you to overdo it. It doesn't pay in the end, you know." Miss Travers smiled as she spoke, and Olwen tried to smile back, but her head ached so, and she was so alarmed at the very idea of being thought ill, that it was not a very successful attempt.

"I should like you to report to Matron," the Head continued, surveying her critically. "Tell her I should like her to give you something for your headache."

"Yes, Miss Travers." Olwen's voice was expressionless. She was wondering if this was an order that really need be obeyed, or if Miss Travers would forget about it. Miss Travers, on the other hand, was making a mental note to ask Matron what she thought of Olwen Lloyd-Evans.

Olwen left the Head's room with her precious notes held tightly in her hand, and ran down to the gardens,

feeling pretty sure that Eve would be wandering about waiting to know what had happened to her.

“Eve! Eve!” she called as she caught sight of Eve’s dark head peeping round the corner of the weeping ash. “I’ve got my notes!”

Eve emerged bodily from the arbour. “Good egg! Where did you find them?” she asked eagerly.

“Miss Travers gave them to me. She’d got them.”

“Miss Travers! Oh, you’re mad! Do you mean to tell me the Head went to your desk——”

Olwen laughed. “Indeed no! She found them in a book in the Library—a book on Mid-Victorian Women Writers.”

Eve drew back blankly. “Olwen! But we weren’t supposed to look in any books.”

“I know. That’s just it.”

“Just what? *Did* you look in and leave the notes there?”

“Didn’t I tell you I’d lost them?” Olwen cried indignantly. “It’s the girl who took them that left them in the book, not me. Eve!”

“Oh, of course,” Eve said hastily. “Of course—only——”

“Only what?” asked Olwen slowly.

“Don’t get ratty. It’s such a thing to suppose a girl would open your desk and take your notes and

walk off to the Library with them and leave them there—I can't——”

“ You'd sooner think I'd cheat?” Olwen said coldly.

“ Sakes—no, you cuckool!” cried Eve hastily. “ Of course I wouldn't. I was only wondering— Of course you wouldn't cheat, Olwen—you don't need to, either. What did the Head say?”

Olwen hesitated. “ I'm trying to think,” she said. “ I'm very stupid. It never struck me anyone would think *I'd* left them in the book till the Head showed me, and *then* I never thought you'd think it——”

“ I didn't! I didn't! you idiot!” Eve declared remorsefully. “ Only I couldn't see all round it at first.”

“ I can't see all round it now,” Olwen said with that weary passing of her hand over her forehead. “ I think the Head wasn't sure about it at first, but she says she trusts me.”

“ Oh, honey!” protested Eve, “ so do I, to the last cent. I say, before I forget—the Malevers lot have been looking for you. They've found your glass. I didn't know you'd lost it.”

Olwen laughed as she took the glass from Eve and looked at it affectionately. “ I didn't tell you because I was afraid you'd be wanting to rush off and buy another,” she said. “ I *am* glad they found it.”

Eve looked doubtful. “ I'm rather sorry I gave it

to you,” she said. “I don’t believe it’s good for your eyes, and if you hadn’t got it perhaps you’d *have* to give in and have them seen to.”

“Oh, but you are a fusser!” laughed Olwen again. “Well, I must go and put it away and my notes too, in case anyone else takes a fancy to them.”

“I say,” asked Eve, as Olwen turned away, “are you going to say anything to—to—anyone?”

“No, I don’t think so,” Olwen replied with a tightening of her lips.

But someone else was going to say something. Prayers were held in Hall that night, and after the Malevers contingent had filed out, the Head signed for the rest of the school to resume their seats.

“What’s the matter now?” whispered Josey to her neighbour. “It’s the second time this term we’ve had this sort of solemn stoppage.”

“All to do with Tredennings, of course,” the neighbour, who was a Courtenays girl, retorted, and received a vicious nudge by way of reply. But the Head was speaking.

“Girls, I want to know who among those who took the course of lectures on Mid-Victorian women writers has been consulting a book on that subject which was in the Library.”

There was a stir among the members of the Fifth,

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and Olwen's heart gave a sickening thump. She glanced to where Adeleine sat with June, a row or two away, but Adeleine had not changed colour nor turned a hair—it was June who blushed as hotly as Olwen herself.

“Some of you,” the Head continued, “may consider that the identification of the notes would show who had broken the rule I laid down. But the girl who wrote the notes tells me she had lost them. You will see what an awkward position this girl is in, and I shall expect the one who found the notes, and mislaid them in the book, to report herself to me to retrieve her honour.”

There was no giggling now, and no whispering. This was a serious matter affecting the honour of every House in the school. Even when the Head had left the Hall the girls filed out in a grave silence. Olwen and Eve had looked at one another meaningly, and Eve whispered: “Don't say anything.”

Outside, a group of Fifth Formers from all the Houses had collected.

“I say, *who's* lost her notes?” Bertha Dawes of Courtenays was asking loudly.

“It's all very well to say someone took her notes, whoever she is,” said a Faraday girl disgustedly. “Anyone who was sneak enough to use a book like

that wouldn't mind putting the blame on someone else.”

June paused on the outskirts of the group. “That's why it's so beastly for the girl,” she interposed; “people *would* say that, and she's helpless.”

There was something in June's voice that made everyone turn round, and Adeleine darted a startled glance at her set face.

“Did *you* lose your notes?” Bertha laughed in astonishment.

June shook her head. “Rather not,” she said. “No one would want to take mine, you may be sure.”

“Well, who took those, then? You seem to know.”

“I was making a general observation,” June said, with a laugh, and turned away. After a moment's hesitation Adeleine followed, and walked beside her back to Tredennings. For a few minutes neither of them spoke, then Adeleine said scornfully:

“You're an awful ass, June, really. The girls will be thinking *you've* done it if you go on like that. I can't think what good you think you are doing.”

June stopped suddenly. “Look here, Adeleine,” she said. “Are you going to tell the Head that you took those notes?”

“Me? Don't be so stupid. Of course I shan't go

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and tell her any such thing—you're perfectly ridiculous. All because Olwen spoke to me that time!"

"Very well. I don't want to say anything if I can help it, but perhaps you remember that day I found you in the Library and——"

"You don't know what I was looking at," Adeleine said defiantly.

"I've a very good idea now. I always did wonder why you—well, never mind; but, Adeleine, if Olwen gets any unpleasantness through this I shall tell the Head what I know."

"June—you sneak!"

June winced. "I should feel a worse sneak to let an innocent girl take the blame," she said. "And you needn't think I shan't hate the whole thing—I shall. Oh, Adeleine," she added with a sudden change of tone, "do be a sport and own up. I'll go with you and do anything you like if you will."

"Don't be absurd!" said Adeleine in a voice that broke off abruptly as she turned away and left June standing there.

CHAPTER XIII

In the Common Room

Matron came to the door of the Common Room just before bed-time that night. It was getting chilly in the evenings now and the girls had most of them come in early.

"Is Olwen here?" asked Matron, her eyes wandering over the room thoughtfully, as if she was thinking what other girls she might want.

"Olwen!" said her nearest neighbour, giving her a friendly dig, "wake up. Matron wants you."

Olwen looked up from her book with a start. There was generally such a babel going on just now that you had to bury yourself deeply in a book to be able to read at all.

She jumped up hastily. "I'm sorry; I didn't notice. Keep my book for me, will you, Eve?"

"Chuck it over," said Eve elegantly.

"I want you in the Staff Room," Matron said, with a passing glance at her. "Molly, what is the explanation of a big patch of ink on your pillowslip?"

"Oh, Matron dear, I'm so sorry," said Molly deprecatingly. "It was just a pure accident. I'd got my pen in the pocket of my jumper, and I forgot and threw my jumper across the room on to my bed because I was in a hurry—and that happened. I'm *so* sorry. I meant to have told you, but it sort of slipped my memory. Won't something take it out?"

"You're a very careless girl, Molly. Laurel, you're not forgetting your tonic, I hope?"

Laurel looked up vaguely. "Oh dear, I'm afraid I am. I really meant to take it but—well, I haven't, Matron."

Anne chuckled. "Matron, I'll look after her, shall I? When does she have to have it? After meals? Now that's a thing I *shan't* forget."

Laurel laughed at her over the top of her book. "Little horror! Anything to be dabbling in medicine."

"Very well," agreed Matron, "I'll hold you responsible, Dr. Anne. Come along, Olwen."

Once in the Staff Room, Matron put her hands on Olwen's shoulders and turned her to the light.

"Why didn't you report yourself to me?" she inquired curtly.

"I—I half forgot."

"You can't *half* forget, as you call it. Why didn't you report?"

"I'm sorry. I didn't want to have a fuss, because I'm really better."

"Rubbish, my dear," Matron said brusquely, releasing her and pointing to a chair. "Sit down. Miss Travers asked me about you and then we found out you had disobeyed orders."

"I didn't think of it as exactly an order."

"Miss Travers' suggestions are Royal commands," said Matron, with a sudden smile. "As a matter of fact, I had been watching you for the last few days and thinking you looked anything but well, so now we'll have no nonsense."

Olwen sighed in resignation, but also with a sense of relief that surprised her. If the powers that be had really seen that she was not well, it was not so necessary to make such violent efforts not to look tired and headachy.

"Have you ever had your eyes tested?" Matron asked at the end of a long string of questions.

"No, Matron."

"Then I am sure that ought to be done. Let me see——"

"Oh but, please, I don't want it done," Olwen exclaimed with a worried note in her voice that made Matron look at her in surprise.

"My dear, don't be absurd! Anyone would think

it was as bad as going to the dentist! It doesn't hurt, you know."

"Oh, it isn't *that!*"

"Well, what is it?"

Olwen tried a little laugh that was not very successful. "It's the fuss and bother, and it might stop my work and I can't afford to lose time," she said at last.

"You're far more likely to lose time if you let yourself get worked up like this. Of course, if your mother will see to it next holidays, there isn't much more than a month now."

"I haven't got a mother," said Olwen.

Matron apologized hastily. "My dear, I'm sorry. I forgot for the minute. Well, your guardian then."

Olwen thought of dear, homely old Marget, who knew nothing of such people as oculists; and of the dreamy old Vicar who would never imagine young people ought to wear glasses. "I could tell them," she said as Matron looked out the key of the medicine cupboard.

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"What does Matron want Olwen for in that highly mysterious manner?" asked someone casually as the door closed on the two.

"Oh, I don't suppose it's anything serious," Kath-

leen answered. "She's the white hen that never strays."

Laurel looked up from her book; she had an uncanny faculty of always hearing if any of her friends needed defence. "All the better for some of you if you weren't such a speckled lot," she said pleasantly. "Olwen's a person of one idea."

"I wonder if she's found her notes," remarked Adeleine. June was not in the room.

"Why!" Everyone looked up at her. "Was it Olwen who lost her notes then?" asked Dorothy Burton.

Adeleine nodded. "Yes, she told me so some days ago. Asked me if I'd seen them anywhere, in fact."

There was a second's pause. "Jolly uncomfortable for her after the Head's speech," said Molly rather blankly.

"Extraordinary!" remarked Laurel emerging again. "But why did she ask you, I wonder? Didn't she ask anyone else?"

"I don't know," shrugged Adeleine, suddenly wondering what imp of mischief had made her refer to the matter at all.

"But doesn't anyone know?" persisted Laurel. "Did she ask anyone here?"

"She didn't ask me."

"Nor me."

"It's the first I've heard of it."

"Extraordinary!" murmured Laurel again, "because I don't think you're very pally, are you?"

Adeleine gave a short laugh. "No," she said scornfully.

"Au contraire, in fact," Eve drawled. She had been sitting thoughtfully chewing the end of her pencil and wondering what she could say. She felt sure that Adeleine was trying to insinuate that Olwen had herself left the papers in the book, but until she said so definitely it was difficult to answer. Besides, in any case, she could not accuse Adeleine of having taken them unless there was some proof. Perhaps she could drop a little hint.

"I think Olwen asked you because she found you in the Fifth when she went for her notes and they'd gone, didn't she?"

"Did she? I think afterwards she did say something of that kind. I think Welsh people are rather—er—well, *imaginative*, don't you?"

"Celtic, my dear," cried Molly laughingly. "Of course, you wretched English do love to label other nationalities! The Welsh are—ahem! 'imaginative'; the Irish are dirty and quarrelsome and keep pigs in the drawing-room—only *we* don't let them in the drawing-room at home, they aren't allowed any

farther than the hall—we're rather particular Irish!"

"Idiot!" laughed Jackie, and threw a cushion at her; but, as Molly ducked, it hit Kathleen instead and was promptly returned with violence.

"To continue," said Molly, pulling a face at Jackie, "the French are vain and frivolous—Cosette, hearest thou, my child?"

"It is all one to me," Cosette assured them gloomily. "Myself, I am not vain. I know my own nose—and frivolous, *mon Dieu*, how in this school can one be frivolous? Do I not study lessons all morning and evening and cricket all afternoon. Oh, la, la—you do not talk sense."

There was a peal of laughter.

"Poor Cosette!" said Anne. "Ruth's made her practise at the nets this afternoon and she's very sick."

"There's another thing you English say," Molly informed them. "You say French girls can't play games."

"Oh no, we don't," said Jackie, "not now, but it used to be true."

"Oh, and Americans think of nothing but the almighty dollar—Eve, that's you. And the Scotch say, 'Hoots, mon, bang goes saxpence', and that's you, Grizel, and that's the lot."

"And about time too," grinned Josey, as the bell

rang; "you're offensive, Molly, and there goes the bell, thank goodness. I'm frightfully sleepy."

Adeleine breathed a sigh of relief. Thanks to Molly she was well out of that discussion.

But it is strange how soon a feeling spreads through a school. A hint dropped by one girl and repeated, with unintentional additions, by a few others, soon becomes an established fact.

The rank and file were already looking coldly on Olwen as the girl who had tried to take an unfair advantage over the others and then told a cock-and-bull story to clear herself. Yet no one said anything definite, and no one said anything at all before Eve. Only Olwen was pointedly ignored or treated with the calm politeness that is worse to bear than rudeness.

It was Eve who spoke to the twins about it that morning when Olwen was out of the way.

"What is the matter with everyone?" she asked impatiently. "Did you see how Kathleen and Dorothy turned away the moment Olwen came up? And Elsie snatched her book out of Olwen's way as if she had something catching."

"It's Adeleine," Jackie said. "She's making a dead set against Olwen just now. She's never liked her, you know, and now she's quite definitely nasty. She

thinks Olwen was cramming up for the essay and lost her notes that way. Of course if that *was* true——”

“But it isn’t!” Eve said hotly.

“No, I know it isn’t, but if Adeleine *thinks* so——” Jackie was trying to be strictly impartial.

“You see,” Josey interposed, “Adeleine’s latest idea is that Olwen is the ‘ghost’. She says she’s sure she saw her slipping into her cubicle last night.”

“I never heard anything so absolutely dotty,” Eve exclaimed in blank amazement.

“Well, that’s what she says,” Josey repeated.

“I shouldn’t tell Olwen,” Jackie advised anxiously.

“I’m not an absolute idiot,” Eve informed her irritably. “The poor old thing has been upset enough about the whole business. You know—I wasn’t going to say anything, but if Adeleine’s making mischief, well, I shall. Olwen always thought that Adeleine took her notes out of her desk. She told her so, in fact, and Adeleine’s never forgiven her.”

“Good night!” ejaculated Josey.

“I don’t know that I should forgive her myself,” said Jackie slowly. “You can’t go round saying that sort of thing.”

Eve lowered her voice. “Jackie, it is true. I’m sure it is. That’s why Adeleine is so ratty with Olwen. She never told anyone what Olwen had said, as any other

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girl would have done, but she's doing her best to put the blame on her."

"But about the ghost?" frowned Josey.

"I shouldn't be a bit surprised to find that was Adeleine herself," Eve declared stoutly.

"But what *for*?" inquired Jackie.

"Goodness knows, but then what does *anyone* do it for?"

None of them had any answer to the question.

CHAPTER XIV

“What can She be Doing?”

In the small hours of the morning Shirley raised herself on her elbow and listened. She had, without saying anything to Monica, left the door of their room ajar, but until now she had never heard a sound. She had for nights lain awake for an hour or two (a long time for Shirley) and had come to the conclusion that the “ghost” had had a scare and had ceased to walk. Now, when she had almost forgotten to listen, she woke up, suddenly wide awake with the knowledge that someone had opened a door—she heard the click of a latch—and then the creaking of a board. She knew that board, it was on the main landing. There was not a minute to lose.

“Monica,” she whispered, “hurry up—the ghost!”

She was out of bed, diving for slippers and dressing-gown, before Monica could grasp what was happening.

“I say, wait a sec!” gasped Monica, sitting up and blinking, then bending over and pulling her slippers from under the bed she followed Shirley on to the corridor.

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"Where was it?" she whispered.

Shirley pointed straight ahead. "I heard the board creak," she whispered back.

They crept softly down the passage to the main landing without using the flash-light at all, but whoever had stepped on the creaky board was not there now—the landing was dark and deserted.

Shirley groped her way softly to the head of the stairs and leant over the banisters. The first time the ghost had been seen was by girls leaning over like this. It was rather eerie straining her eyes down into the darkness below and listening till her body felt like one big ear. She jumped when Monica crept to her side and whispered stealthily:

"Can you hear anything?"

"No."

"What are you going to do, then?"

"Wait and see. The girls upstairs saw her crossing the hall, perhaps——"

Shirley stopped abruptly and Monica's hand gripped her arm fiercely. Something moved below. A very faint sound, and then part of the darkness in the hall seemed to move—at least that is really what it looked like, for it was so very dark that you could distinguish nothing.

"Did you see?" whispered Shirley.

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“Something moved,” Monica breathed in her ear. And they waited tense and breathless for something more to happen.

“She must come back,” Shirley murmured again, after a pause that seemed interminable. “She was up here a minute ago.”

“Shall we see if there’s an empty bed?” suggested Monica, shivering more from excitement than from chilliness.

“H’sh!” This time it was Shirley’s hand that gripped as the faint sound came from below. “She’s coming.”

“What can she be doing? She can’t see! What a nerve!” gasped Monica, and Shirley shook her arm warningly.

The moving piece of darkness crossed the hall again and came towards the stairs. Here the gloom was not so dense, for the landing window lightened it a little, though there was no direct light. It was just enough to show that something or someone whitish was slowly mounting the stairs.

Instinctively the two perfects gripped each other’s hands as they waited, hearts beating wildly, for the ghostly figure to come abreast of them.

Slowly, step by step, she mounted. Apparently she was used to coming in the dark and knew exactly

how many stairs there were, for she never hesitated or made a false step when she reached the landing, but walked straight on, unconscious of the two who were straining their eyes to catch a glimpse of her face as she passed.

Shirley lifted her flash-light, hesitated, and lowered it again. She was afraid the girl might be badly frightened if the light flashed in her eyes, and cry out and waken the others. They didn't want a scene in the small hours of the morning. Still they must know who it was. She put her hand on the bulb and switched on the light. The girl passed ahead of them to the open doorway of Dormitory B.

"Quick!" Monica's quivering whisper was in Shirley's ear as she moved her hand from the bulb. The ray of light caught the white-robed figure in the doorway, moved quickly up till it gave a sudden clear view of Olwen Lloyd-Evans as she slipped through into the silent dormitory.

"Well!" gasped Monica helplessly, when they found themselves safely back in their own domain. "That's a staggerer! *Now* what are we going to do?"

Shirley put her torch down on the table without answering.

"I wonder if we'd better have tackled her to-night," she said at last, sitting on the edge of her bed and

staring at Monica with troubled eyes. “Taken un-awares like that we might have got more out of her. If I send for her she may guess and have some story ready.”

“But what in creation can she have been up to? She’s not the sort of girl you’d expect to be up to tricks, is she?”

Shirley shook her head very slowly. “No. But she’s a queer, nervous, overstrung sort of kid—and ‘Celtic’, as Molly would say, on top of it all,” she added, with a half-laugh.

Monica pulled up her legs and sat hugging her knees. “You know,” she said, “strictly between ourselves, there’s a sort of feeling against Olwen just now.”

Shirley nodded.

“Did you know?”

“Guessed it.”

“It’s Adeleine, of course. But now they know Olwen is the girl whose notes were found in the library book, it’s very easy to imagine she may have mislaid them there herself and all this talk of having had them taken out of her desk is a blind.”

Again Shirley nodded. “Difficult to prove either way,” she said thoughtfully. “And if the girls found out that Olwen is playing ghost they’d believe her guilty of anything.”

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"Well, I come back to my first question," said Monica, suppressing a yawn. "What's she doing? It looks jolly black for her. Do you remember how she churned up Laurel's papers?"

"M'm," assented Shirley. "What does she expect to find, I wonder?"

Monica released her knees and flung her arms wide in a vigorous stretch. "Oh, let's go to sleep," she yawned. "Perhaps we'll dream a solution."

But they didn't, and Shirley woke up next morning with a feeling of depression that she could not at first account for. Then it came upon her in a flood and she groaned.

"I suppose I'd better send for Olwen this morning," she said gloomily, as she struggled into her jumper after a silent dressing-time. "The only other thing would be to report her straight to Miss Carstairs, and I feel as if I'd like to give the girl a chance—though goodness knows what she can say."

Monica hesitated with a hair ribbon in her hand. "I don't know," she said. "I've been thinking about it, and I wonder—do you think by any chance that the kid is walking in her sleep?"

Shirley swung round quickly. "Monica! Why did I never think of it!" she cried in a tone of excited relief. "That would account for everything."

Monica proceeded calmly with the tying of her hair. “Of course, it’s only my idea,” she said; “don’t go and build on it, because I may be quite wrong—I don’t know a thing about sleep-walkers. Only, she’s not at all the sort of girl to go playing ghost, is she? And did you get a good look at her face last night?”

“Not full face,” replied Shirley. “I wish I’d seen her eyes. You didn’t either, did you?”

“No, but I did notice one thing that didn’t strike me at the time, but I thought of it afterwards—the torch flashed right on and past her and made a patch of light ahead of her and she took no notice.”

“Yes, I remember,” said Shirley. “I never thought of it at the time, but, of course, she couldn’t help seeing it, could she?”

“Well, *I* don’t think she could,” Monica agreed. “But I don’t see, even now, what we’re going to do.”

“It’s rather beyond us, isn’t it?” Shirley decided, as she turned her mattress with a vigorous sweep. “I think it’s more Matron’s job. Come in.”

The door opened apologetically, as Shirley answered the knock with astonished impatience, and Eve poked her head in.

“I say, Shirley, I *am* sorry, but can I speak to you and Monica a minute before breakfast?”

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"What on earth about?" inquired Shirley. Really, if unfortunate prefects were to be bombarded in their bedrooms before the day's work had begun, life was not going to be worth living.

Eve shut the door behind her.

"Well, it's about Olwen," she explained. "I hope it's not going to sound like tale-telling, but I don't know what to do."

"Go on," said Shirley, sitting on the edge of her bed again and avoiding Monica's eye.

"You see," Eve continued, "there's a regular set against Olwen by some of the girls, and now some are saying *she's* the ghost."

Shirley was conscious that Monica had paused in the middle of a much-needed tidying of her top drawer and had turned to stare at Eve.

"Of course, anyone can *say* anything," Shirley said placidly. "If it's just pure spite, it doesn't matter, but I don't suppose you'd come here at this unearthly hour for that."

"No, but when they've said they've *seen* her, Shirley! And I *know* she wouldn't do such a thing and it makes me wild. You see, they don't say anything about it to me—they don't dare—but they *are* saying it. And what's the good of my simply declaring she wouldn't do it?"

“Who has seen her?”

Eve hesitated. “If you don’t mind, Shirley, I’d rather not say names. I wouldn’t have come, only I really don’t want Olwen to be worried any more. She’d be just awfully upset if she heard it, and it’s so important she shouldn’t get nervy because of her work.”

Shirley smiled up at the slim boyish figure and the earnest face.

“You’re a good pal, Eve,” she told her, and turned and looked over her shoulder at Monica leaning on the foot of the bedstead watching. “I think we’d better take Eve into partnership, don’t you?”

Monica nodded. “She might know if what we think is right,” she said, and Eve glanced from one to the other questioningly.

Shirley turned back to the younger girl.

“Do you happen to know, Eve, if Olwen has ever walked in her sleep?”

Eve threw back her curly head and whistled.

“I never thought of *that*,” she said.

“Never mind what you thought,” said Shirley magisterially. “Has she ever done it, do you know?”

Eve frowned and tapped her forehead thoughtfully.

“I’m just trying to remember. You muddle me up when you jump on me, Shirley. I think—yes,” she

broke out triumphantly, "she told me that once when she was working hard at that potty little school of hers, her nurse, Marget, found her taking books out of the bookcase when she was fast asleep—but it was only once, I think."

"It shows it's possible, anyhow," said Monica, "and that's a great thing."

"Did *you* know that they said Olwen was the ghost?" asked Eve.

"No, but we saw her last night," Shirley replied.

"You *did*!" Eve looked from one to the other with a face of dismay. "Land's sake—sorry—but I say, how awful! I didn't really believe anyone had seen her. What can we do?"

"*You're* going to do nothing, my dear," said Shirley, "until I tell you. Probably Monica and I will consult Matron, because if Olwen is really walking in her sleep it is more her job than ours."

"I see. Well, I don't want to barge in, Shirley, only Olwen is *my* job, you know. And she's in a jolly nervous state with all this bother over the lost notes, and goodness knows what else. I say, I'm real glad I came and asked you, Shirley."

"Yes. Well, don't go round talking," Monica interposed.

"Am I likely to?" Eve retorted indignantly and

stalked out of the room. But before her hand was off the handle, she opened the door again.

“Shirley?”

“Aren’t you gone yet?” demanded Shirley wrathfully.

“I was, but I’ve remembered something frightfully important that I wanted to say to you, only Olwen put it out of my mind.”

“Oh—well, hurry up then.”

“It’s about what we’re doing for the Fête; we wanted it to be a big surprise to you, you see, so the Tredennings Players have been getting up a play that Laurel wrote—rattling good one——”

“What a bombshell!” laughed Monica, as Shirley stood and stared. “And where have you been rehearsing this epoch-making play, may we ask?”

“On No Man’s Land—it’s all right. Miss Carstairs said we might, three times a week. Shirley, don’t *glower*! We didn’t tell you because we were afraid it mightn’t be a success and we didn’t want to raise your hopes for nothing.”

Shirley laughed. “I’m glad you spared my feelings, but why have you decided to spare them no longer?”

“Because, really, we do think it’s going to be ripping! And we want a rehearsal in the Common Room this afternoon if we can—only the House to be admitted;

and we want Miss Carstairs and you and Monica to come and see if it's good enough for a side show—it's *quite* short!"

The prefects looked at one another and laughed.

"Can we?" asked Shirley, and Monica nodded. "All right, then, you must see Miss Carstairs and fix the time up with her. And, for goodness sake, go now."

"I thought Laurel had something on her mind," Monica grinned, as the door closed finally on Eve. "A play, no less!"

"Events crowd thick and fast," said Shirley grimly.

CHAPTER XV

Rehearsed—and Unrehearsed

Miss Carstairs gave an amused consent to be present at a rehearsal of "The Youngest Lady-in-Waiting" provided it was held directly after dinner. The news was received with mingled triumph and terror by the "Company".

"A rotten time for a rehearsal, just after dinner," groaned Anne, "so bad for your digestion."

"Haven't got one," Molly remarked cheerfully, "at least, it never tells me it's there. Besides, there always *are* matinées, you silly coon."

"I hope you'll not spoil the play for me," Laurel said anxiously, wandering round with the typescript in her hand. "I ought really to have come and heard you before. Jackie, if you giggle I don't think I'll ever forgive you."

"You tell that to Eve," protested Jackie. "If I giggle it'll be her fault, because she always says 'Waal'. You can't be dignified with an American accent."

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“ I say, stop scrapping and get ready,” called Shirley.
“ You’ll have Miss Carstairs here in a minute.”

There was a howl of dismay and a rush behind the screen that Matron had lent from the sick-room for this occasion only. Shirley turned to Laurel.

“ ‘ The actors received a great ovation followed by loud cries of Author, author!’ ” she quoted dramatically.
“ Fancy you being in league with these kids and never telling us a word about it.”

“ Oh, I promised them to keep it a secret; besides, I thought probably the whole thing would be a failure and the least said the better. Of course, it may be a failure now—I’ve not heard it. Tell me if it sounds awfully feeble, won’t you?”

“ Rather,” Shirley assured her promptly, “ I shall at once jump on you. ‘ Your play is absolutely rotten,’ I shall say. What *you* will say I can’t imagine.”

“ I dare say you are amusing,” said Laurel, “ but I can’t laugh.”

“ By the way Molly and the twins are carrying on I should think they couldn’t do anything else. It’s a pity, rather, that we didn’t have it in Hall. I don’t believe it would have attracted any more attention than this. I say,” Shirley raised her voice, “ you girls who aren’t in the play and want to watch, put your chairs at the other end of the room, and please remember

we don't want this rehearsal talked of all over Lestholme."

There was a prompt rush for chairs, for Tredennings to a girl was determined to see the rehearsal, even if it was only to make fun of it. Only Olwen, whose friends were all behind the screen, felt herself unwanted. Eager girls edged her out of the way as they grouped their chairs together, and no one asked her to join them.

She slipped out of the room unnoticed, thankful for the quiet and the cool air on her hot forehead, as she stood for a minute at the open door of Tredennings, thinking that, after all, she was paying dearly for her Lestholme scholarship. Then she tilted her chin and took a fresh grip of her courage.

"I'll not be beaten," she said to herself, "I've got to make good for Marget's sake, and for Eve's—and my own, too, indeed," she added with a little wry smile.

But in spite of her good resolutions she didn't feel as if she could face the wondering glances she had seen so often lately. She looked across the lawn to the path by the river wall. It was deserted as it generally was at this time, and Olwen made her way there to sit and stare across to the blue hills of Wales.

Meanwhile the rehearsal was promising well and

Tredennings hugged itself in delight. The girls cast surreptitious glances at Miss Carstairs and nudged one another when she laughed right out at the "comic relief". There were even some hopeful people who thought they saw a tear when Anne sobbed so convincingly, but the majority considered that unduly optimistic.

Still, it was decided to be very likely that Miss Carstairs would report favourably to the Head and that "The Youngest Lady-in-Waiting" might have a chance as a feature of the Fête.

"I think it will be all right," whispered Monica to Shirley; "don't you?"

"Yes. It's rather surprising how well these kids act. Well, if it goes, it will be a good thing for Tredennings and we needn't bother about doing anything else. Look here, I'm going to slip out and find Matron. See what Miss Carstairs thinks about the play, will you?"

Monica nodded and turned her attention back to the stage while Shirley made her way unobtrusively to the door.

Matron was in the Staff Room. "About Olwen Lloyd-Evans?" she said, when Shirley asked to speak to her. "Sit down, Shirley. What is the matter?"

"I don't know whether you've heard the talk about

the ghost?" Shirley began apologetically, as she sat on the edge of one of the prim chairs that seemed to be kept for such official conversations.

"Well?" asked Matron, who never gave herself away if she could help it.

"Because Monica and I heard a good deal about it, and we saw it last night. Matron, it's Olwen." Shirley paused and Matron looked back at her calmly.

"Finish what you've got to say, Shirley. What is it?"

"Well, I hardly like to say it definitely, but both Monica and I think she is walking in her sleep."

"Did she look like it?"

"We didn't see her full face, but Monica noticed that she never saw the light of my torch in front of her. Besides, Olwen isn't a bit the sort of girl to go wandering about at night. She's far too shy—and too law-abiding," she added, with a smile.

"Yes, I should think so, too. I wonder if she ever *has* walked in her sleep?"

"Yes. I asked Eve if she's ever heard Olwen mention such a thing, and she remembered her telling her of one time when she did it—when she was worried."

"Is she worried now?"

"I—I'm afraid so, Matron. She lost some notes for one thing, and I believe that's what she's still

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looking for in her sleep. She seems to go and turn over paper and things—it's awfully weird. But the worst of it is, some of the other girls have recognized her as 'the ghost'—girls who are not very friendly, and they'll make it very awkward for her. She doesn't know anything yet."

"The girl is not very well, I know," Matron said slowly, pursing her lips in thoughtful fashion.

"I thought she wasn't. That's really why I came to you."

"Quite right," said Matron, looking blankly out of the window. "I think Dr. Martin comes home to-day. I—what is that child doing?" she broke off suddenly, with a quick change of tone. "Who is it?"

Shirley looked over Matron's shoulder at a small girl running madly across the sacred lawn, calling something in a shrill excited voice.

"It's Dorothy Burton's sister, I think—Sara."

"I hope there's nothing wrong," Matron broke in hastily. "Sara!" she called through the open window. "What is the matter? Come here."

But Sara was past hearing anything so far away as Matron's voice.

"Something must have happened," Matron said anxiously. "Run and stop her, Shirley."

Shirley was out of the house before Matron had

finished speaking and intercepted Sara in her mad career. "Sara! Sara! What on earth's the matter?" she cried, and caught hold of the child by her shoulder.

"It's Olwen. I—I think she's dead," wailed Sara.

"Nonsense," said Matron's matter-of-fact voice at Shirley's elbow. "Where is she?"

"On the river walk—she jumped up to speak to us and she sort of went all of a heap, and she looks awful and——"

"Never mind," said Matron briskly. "I expect she'll soon be all right. Run back to your house—I wonder what you were doing on the river walk? Shirley, run back to the Staff Room and get the salts and the flask from the cupboard and fill the thermos with water and bring it as quickly as you can. I expect the girl has fainted."

Olwen was lying at the foot of the low parapet with Matron kneeling beside her when Shirley arrived breathless with the flasks. She certainly looked ill enough to justify Sara's alarm, but Matron glanced up reassuringly.

"That's right, Shirley. Pour some water on this handkerchief, please. It's just a faint—she's coming round already."

"She does look bad," whispered Shirley, as she passed the wet handkerchief.

Matron nodded, bathing Olwen's forehead gently. The heavy eyelids fluttered, half-lifted, closed, then opened widely. "All right, my dear," said Matron calmly, "don't worry. You fainted, but you're all right now. (The flask, please, Shirley; pour some out.) Take a sip of this and don't try to talk."

The colour came back slowly into Olwen's face, and in a minute or two she struggled up to a sitting position. "I'm so sorry," she said apologetically. "I jumped up quickly and everything went black and I suppose I fell down. I'm all right now."

"You will be in a few minutes," said Matron. "But we'll have you up in the sick-room for to-night and see what's the matter."

Olwen opened her lips to protest, but somehow she felt too tired to mind very much what happened to her, and submitted meekly and even thankfully to the support of Matron's strong arm as they made their slow way back to Tredennings.

When some time later Shirley, having helped to put Olwen to bed in the big, airy sick-room and brought up the things she needed from her cubicle, came running downstairs, she found excitement in the air, and the open doorway of the Common Room was thronged with expectant faces.

"She comes!" cried Cosette excitedly.

Eve and Jackie rushed out to her. "Shirley, come in and tell us," they begged. "What's happened?"

"Shirley, do come," called Dorothy Burton. "Wasn't it my small sister who came yelling across the lawn? I consider I ought to know what she's up to."

Shirley laughed and submitted to being dragged into the room and seated in the most comfortable chair.

"I'm afraid you'll be most awfully disappointed," she said. "It isn't anything at all exciting. Your precious sister, Dorothy, came shrieking that Olwen was lying dead on the river walk. Don't look like that, Eve; I assure you she's not a bit dead. She's fainted, that's all."

"Can I go and——" began Eve anxiously.

"No, you can't, my child. She's in the sick-room for the present. She has been looking awfully poorly for some time," Shirley added, and glanced round the circle of listening girls. Suddenly her eyes flashed. "Well, you're not a very sympathetic lot, I must say," she said sharply. "It's only decent to look as if you're sorry for a girl who's ill."

"Of course we're sorry," said Elsie sullenly—she happened to be the one who had intercepted most of Shirley's flash of indignation. "Only I suppose we were thinking——"

"Too great a strain on most of you, I quite under-

stand," snapped Shirley. "I think, while we are on the subject, I should like one of you to tell me what you have against Olwen that you can't even look decently sorry when she nearly works herself to death."

"I don't think you can expect anyone to accuse a girl in public like this," protested Elsie.

"Accuse! Why, no! I didn't think of anything so definite as that. I didn't think of there being any question of an accusation."

"I don't think there is," Jackie interposed. "I'll tell you what has been—well, not exactly said, Shirley, but implied." She looked round at the others rather nervously. "I think it's the fairest thing to do," she said apologetically. "If anyone went and told Shirley in the Prefects' Room it would be like sneaking; if you all hear what I say you can stop me if you don't think it's true."

"Go on, Jackie," said Shirley gravely; "I think you're right."

"You know it was Olwen's notes that were lost, don't you? And they were found in a book we were not supposed to look at? Well, I don't suppose anyone knows who started the idea, but there's quite a sort of feeling that it was possible for Olwen to have mislaid them in the book herself. It's a horrid thing to say, I know, but then, someone has done something pretty

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horrid, whichever way you look at it." There was a subdued murmur of assent. Monica, who was passing the open door, paused on the threshold and then came in and stood listening.

"Is that all?" asked Shirley.

Jackie hesitated. "I hope you don't think I believe these things," she said. "I don't, so I think I can tell them better. You've heard of the ghost?" she went on reluctantly. "Oh, of course, you have. Some of the girls say they have seen it—her, I mean, and it's Olwen."

"I'd like to say that I don't believe a single word of it," burst out Eve hotly. "Olwen is as straight as a die, and, besides, she's so jolly clever she's no need to do shady things like that. There isn't a girl in Tredennings works a quarter as hard."

"That's quite true," said Dorothy. "I can't see why Olwen *should* do a thing like that—even if she was that sort of girl."

"She isn't that sort," persisted Eve.

"Of course," said Monica, "it need not be a Tredennings girl—all the Fifth are interested in the notes."

"Exactly," agreed Shirley. "It seems to me," she continued, getting up from her chair, "that there's a good deal to be cleared up. Someone knows the truth,

and I hope—if she's a Tredennings girl—she will have the pluck to put matters straight for Olwen's sake, and for the sake of the House—and for her own sake, too. Are all Tredennings here now?" she asked.

"All except Adeleine and Olwen, I think," said Monica. "I was just counting them up. I met Adeleine going to Courtenays just now."

"Well then, think it over, girls," said Shirley, as she slipped her arm into Monica's on her way to the door. "'Up Tredennings!' remember."

June, who had been staring fixedly through the window, turned round. "I'd like to say," she said clearly, "that I'm sure Olwen was quite straight about the notes. I speak for Adeleine as well as myself."

Shirley paused on the threshold and looked back. Every other girl in the room had also turned to stare at June and there was a dead silence.

"Thank you, June," said Shirley quietly.

"Of course," Elsie said, breaking the spell, "I don't want to be unkind about Olwen, but er—someone did really see her prowling about in the night. If things are going to be cleared up I think she should explain what she was up to. I found my attaché case open one morning——"

"I think it can be explained," Shirley answered

gravely. "Will you please *not* talk about it to the rest of the school? It's purely a Tredennings affair."

As she left the room June followed quickly and dashed through the Hall into the garden. The prefects looked after her and then at each other. "There's something up," said Monica elegantly.

CHAPTER XVI

“What are You Going to Do?”

When June dashed out of Tredennings her one idea was to intercept Adeleine on her way from Courtenays and give her one last chance of saving her honour. On one thing she was determined—whatever Adeleine did, *she* was not going to stand by and see Olwen condemned for what she had not done.

But Adeleine did not appear till the tea bell rang, and from then till evening prep June had not a chance of speaking to her alone. She wondered if it was quite by chance that Adeleine had a heated discussion with some Courtenays girls over the tea table, or whether she was deliberately keeping her at a distance.

“You missed all the excitement this afternoon,” Anne said, as she passed Adeleine’s desk just before prep.

“Why, what has happened?” asked Adeleine. “Just my luck to be out of it.”

“Oh, rumours and alarms! Olwen reported dead by

Sara Burton, and found in a faint on the river walk, and escorted home by Matron and Shirley—grand spectacular effect; then—oh, there’s Miss Carstairs. I say, somebody lend me an algebra before she rings the bell.”

June said nothing at all and kept her eyes on her book; Adeleine after one quick glance at her did not look again. But when work was over for the night they went out together without a word, both knowing that something had to be settled before bed-time.

“I want to speak to you,” said June briefly when they were outside.

“I know you do,” returned Adeleine. “Let’s go to the ash seat.”

They turned and walked along silently till they came to the little secluded seat under the drooping branches of the weeping ash. “Well?” said Adeleine, as they faced each other, each sitting against an arm of the seat.

“Adeleine, you’ve got to do something about this matter of Olwen’s. Shirley had a pow-wow just now while you were at Courtenays. She says that Olwen is really quite poorly through working too hard—and she must be jolly bad to faint like that—and then she wanted an explanation of the feeling against Olwen, and no one wanted to say. Then Jackie Vane told her,

and some of the girls said they didn't believe Olwen *was* guilty."

June paused. She wished Adeleine would say something and not simply stare at her like that.

"Shirley said she hoped the girl who had done it would own up for the sake of Olwen, and the House, and for her own sake." She spoke jerkily, because she felt as if perhaps she sounded priggish—but there was no other way of putting it. "And then," she continued, "I don't know what you'll think, Adeleine, but I said neither you nor I believed Olwen guilty."

"You think I did it, don't you?" asked Adeleine.

June hesitated. "I think you know something about it," she said.

"What proof have you?"

"I haven't any," June said disgustedly, "at least, not anything I could really say. It's only an impression, and I *did* meet you coming out of the Library just about the time those notes were lost."

Adeleine gave a little laugh. "You couldn't call that proof!"

June pulled a leaf off the weeping ash and tore it to pieces. "If you think——" she began, but Adeleine went on talking.

"I only asked you that, June, because I want you to see that what I am going to do is because I *want*

to do it. You can't make me, and I'm not frightened into it.”

June dropped the remainder of the leaf and sat with her hands on her lap staring blankly at her. “What *are* you going to do then?” she asked.

“I'm going to tell the girls at Tredennings just what happened. I'll tell them to-night and to-morrow I'll go to the Head.”

“Oh!” Unconsciously June clasped her hands tightly. “You *couldn't* tell the girls!”

“Isn't that what you wanted me to do?” demanded Adeleine. “I've never liked Olwen much, but—I don't know—I think it was more for the fun of the thing that I ragged her; it was a bit of excitement, because I really didn't dislike her as much as that.”

“It isn't just the ragging,” June murmured half to herself.

Adeleine nodded. “I know. Well, I got into a hole and I couldn't get out, and got panicky, I suppose—but, truly, June, I never meant to do Olwen any real harm——”

“Eve says she's been frightfully upset over the notes.”

“I know,” said Adeleine again, and then looking at June's miserable face, she suddenly smiled. “Poor old thing,” she said. “You've had a rotten time with me

lately. You'll be glad when to-night's over—so shall I. I say, don't you come into the Common Room. I shan't expect you to chum with me after this, you know."

"Is that what you think of me?" asked June sharply. "If you want to know, I like you a jolly sight better than I ever have before. Besides, in any case, I believe in being friends for better, for worse."

"At present it's decidedly for worse, isn't it?" laughed Adeleine, a trifle shakily. "And while we're being sentimental, I may as well confess that I think no end of you for standing up to me as you did. You're an awful sport, June."

Meanwhile Matron had sent for Shirley. "Shirley," she said, "I've put Olwen in the sick-room because she's got a bad headache, you understand? But I'm going to sleep in one of the cubicles myself and I shall hear if she moves about at all, and perhaps we shall solve the mystery."

"Do you think she's really ill?" asked Shirley anxiously.

"She's in a very nervous, over-wrought state," answered Matron promptly, "so if she has any tendency to sleep-walking she is nearly sure to do it to-night. But I don't want all the House lying awake listening for her, so don't talk about it."

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“Why no, of course not,” Shirley said, with an indignant flush. Had she been Head of Tredennings for nearly three terms without learning to hold her tongue! “I shouldn’t dream of talking about it, but—you will let me know as soon as possible what happens, won’t you, Matron? Because, as soon as you and Miss Carstairs think we can, I do think we ought to tell the girls. As it is, they’re either nervous over a ghost, or they’re suspecting Olwen of—well, I don’t quite know what.”

“You shall know as soon as possible,” said Matron good-humouredly. “You see, I am telling the news up to date. To-morrow, I shall have Dr. Martin in to see Olwen, whatever happens.”

The curfew was ringing and most of the girls were already in the Common Room when the two prefects came back to Tredennings after that evening prep, only a few stragglers running in from the playing fields at the last minute. As Shirley came to the door someone touched her arm.

“Shirley, are you coming into the Common Room?” asked a breathless voice.

“Hallo, that you, Adeleine? No, I wasn’t going in. Why?”

“Would you mind? Just for a few minutes?”

Shirley felt an imperative nudge from Monica’s

elbow, but it didn't need that to make her answer promptly. "Yes, certainly, if you want me," she said, and refrained from asking why.

Adeleine stood on one side for the prefects to pass in first. "Would you mind," she asked, still in that odd breathless voice, "would you mind just telling the girls that I want to say something?"

Shirley's wide brown eyes looked at her gravely in the dusk of the hall. "Very well," she said. Then in a lower tone she added as she passed into the Common Room, "I'll stand by you, Adeleine."

"I say, switch on the light," called someone. "Oh, sorry, Shirley, didn't know it was you. Do you mind switching on? Isn't it dark early?"

"Cold, too," groaned a chilly mortal, hugging a woolly over her light frock.

"Can't we have a window or door shut?" suggested Kathleen. "I like *air*, but really——"

"We'll have the door shut," said Shirley. "What a crowd! Well, look here, stop talking, will you, because Adeleine wants to say something."

She looked round for a seat and nodded thanks to Cosette who had pushed one forward. "Now fire away, Adeleine," she said.

There was a dead silence in the room as there had been once before that day, and every eye was fixed on

Adeleine as she stood by the table. June had come forward and seated herself on the corner of the table just behind her friend. It was as near as she could get and all she could do.

“I want to tell everyone,” said Adeleine quietly, “that what Olwen says is perfectly true. She *did* lose her papers, but I had them and I mislaid them in that book in the Library.”

There was not a sound, not a movement, only Shirley's eyes catching sight of June's hand on the edge of the table, saw the knuckles whiten as she clenched them tightly. Adeleine, her eyes fixed on a pattern of the carpet, moistened her lips and went on in the same quiet voice, with a little jerk now and then as if she could not get her breath.

“I don't suppose it makes much difference, really, but I'd like to say I didn't go to Olwen's desk for the notes. They were caught in the lid and half out, and I pulled at them as I passed without thinking. I was just seeing what they were when I heard someone coming, and I thought how awkward it would look to be found with them in my hand and I thought I'd better wait till the other girl had gone. And then, of course, the other girl was Olwen, and she missed her notes at once, and I felt in an awful hole. She thought she heard the lid of her desk bang before she came in, but

it was really mine that fell. But it all helped her to suspect me, and I thought I'd let her find the notes in some other place.

"Afterwards I looked over the notes out of curiosity and I saw something quite different from mine. It puzzled me and I went to look in the Library to see which of us had made a mistake. I knew we weren't supposed to look in that book, but I thought it wouldn't matter as I never meant to use it for the essay. All the same, when I heard someone coming I shut the book in a hurry and left the notes in it. When I went back the book had gone. I've written my essay and sent it in, and I haven't used a single thing I got from Olwen or that book—I never meant to cheat."

This time there was a rustle as she paused and one or two girls exchanged meaning glances. But Adeleine had not finished.

"Of course it was quite natural Olwen should think the worst of me—it was quite true I'd taken her notes, but I couldn't see how to explain, so," her voice dropped still lower, "I tried to put the blame on her. I know it was awful of me. I can't think now how I could do it, but somehow I didn't seem to realize—and then, to-day, I suddenly thought how ill and worried she looked and I began to feel uncomfortable about her. Then when I heard she was really ill, and it was because

of over-work and the bother over the notes I—I can’t explain it, but I——”

The low voice ceased altogether. It was as if Adeleine had come to the end of her endurance, as if she had been wound up and the machinery was running down. The girls were horribly embarrassed. They felt as if it was not quite nice to tell them all this publicly, and yet some of them were beginning to realize it had been the only thing for Adeleine to do.

Shirley jumped up from her chair almost before Adeleine’s last words were spoken. She was as flushed, and looked as uncomfortable as if she herself was the culprit.

“I think Adeleine has done her best now to put matters straight,” she said. “Of course—I don’t want to kick a man when he’s down, none of us do—but I’m awfully sorry any Tredennings girl should have to own up to anything like this. But, at the same time, it has taken a tremendous amount of pluck. I’m afraid you must go to the Head, Adeleine.”

Adeleine nodded. She was past saying any more, but it was June’s chance. She slipped up the table and put her arm through Adeleine’s. “She *was* going to the Head,” she said defiantly. “She’d have gone first, only she wanted you to see she was confessing of her own accord, not because the Head told her to. Nobody

need have known a thing about it if Adeleine hadn't told, and she's done her best to make up."

"We all realize that, June," said Shirley gravely. "But don't forget what all this has meant to Olwen."

"Yes, we've none of us been very nice to her," said Dorothy. "You see—we——" she stopped. She did not want to rub it in, but Adeleine had really put them all on the wrong track.

"But why is Olwen pretending to be a ghost?" inquired Kathleen in a bewildered tone.

"Yes, Adeleine had nothing to do with *that*," said June. "I'm awfully sorry about Olwen, we both are now, and we'll do our best to make up, but really, we can't explain *that*."

Shirley hesitated for a minute and then took Trendennings into her confidence. "No, it had nothing to do with you," she said. "I don't know what Matron will say to me for telling you, but I think perhaps she will agree that it is best in the circumstances to give you what we think is the solution of the mystery. We think Olwen was walking in her sleep—she had done it before when she was worried. Monica and I saw her one night and we think she was asleep then. She has been so upset about her notes that in her sleep she has been looking for them. Perhaps any collection of papers she caught sight of in the day would come into

her dreams and she would go and look for them. Anyhow, there's no need for anyone to be nervous—there'll be no more ghost! Now, I've trusted you—don't talk for goodness sake. Good-night, everybody. Would you and June like to come up with us now, Adeleine?” she asked, by way of affording a way of escape, and the girls watched them go in a silence that broke with the shutting of the door.

“Thank you, Shirley, for helping me out,” said Adeleine, as she said good-night in the Prefects' Room, the others having discreetly stayed down in the Hall. “You must feel pretty sick of me.”

“I can't *think* why you took such a dislike to Olwen. I can understand your not making a friend of her because you are so different in every way, but she's a very decent sort.”

“I don't know, myself,” Adeleine said wearily. “I don't think I *do* dislike her, really. I was an idiot over the scholarship—I believe I'm a snob——” She paused over the word as if that was quite a new idea. “Yes, I suppose I am. And having begun like that, I sort of had to live up to it—I can't explain and I don't suppose you understand.”

“Yes, I do,” answered Shirley promptly. “I think it often happens that way. Well now, go to bed and go to sleep. You look all in.”

She did. Her cheeks were white, and her big grey eyes were dull and heavy with big dark circles under them.

"I've got a beast of a headache. I say, do you think—the Head—will—expel me?" Her voice broke on the last word and her lips quivered as she looked at the prefect imploringly. Shirley bent forward impulsively and kissed her, a rare event at Tredennings.

"You poor thing," she said pityingly. "I don't *think* so, seeing you've made such a clean breast of it—no, I feel sure she won't."

"I really think," said Monica, later on, "that if the poor thing *was* expelled it wouldn't be as bad as what she's gone through this evening. For sheer pluck—cold-blooded pluck too—I never saw anything like it."

Shirley nodded her head gravely. "It's an awful pity," she said.

It was not till after dinner next day that Matron sent again for Shirley and told her that there was no doubt that Olwen *did* walk in her sleep, and that the doctor said he was sure there was something on her mind. "Didn't you say something about her having lost some papers?"

"Yes, Matron, but she needn't worry about them any more—they've been accounted for all right. And,

Matron, I had to tell the girls we thought Olwen walked in her sleep, because they were saying all sorts of things and it was the only way to calm them down. I'm sorry."

Matron was rather annoyed, and said so; she always thought the prefects in these modern schools took too much on themselves.

"Can some of us see her?" asked Shirley meekly, when she had made a suitable apology. "You see, she knew the papers were found, but there was rather an awkward business about them that worried her dreadfully."

"I suppose you'd better, if you're sure you can put her mind at rest. You'd better go now and then she'll have time to calm down before to-night."

Shirley hesitated. "Might Eve Latimer go instead, Matron? I'd love to go, but Eve is her chum and has been in a great state about her."

"Very well. Find her and tell her. And say if I find Olwen excited and with a temperature she shan't go again."

CHAPTER XVII

In the Sick-room

It was over a week before Olwen was allowed to come into school again—a week that Adeleine will remember with a shiver to the end of her days, and many a time did she think how gladly she would have changed places with the girl she had despised.

The interview with the Head—well, it simply did not bear thinking about. The only comfort to be found anywhere was that, in view of the fact that she had confessed voluntarily, she was not to be expelled.

It was June's loyalty that helped Adeleine to bear up against the embarrassed coldness of the other girls and to live through that nightmare of a week when every girl avoided her eye and blushed uncomfortably when she had to speak to her. Indeed, to judge by appearances, half Tredennings was more guilty than Adeleine, who was too miserable and humiliated to be embarrassed any longer. But June was always there, ready to laugh and talk, and act as buffer between

her friend and the rest of the world, and by degrees the buffer became a bridge to connect the two.

Adeleine had dreaded the interview with Olwen only less than that with the Head, but she could not rest till it was over, though Matron would not allow it for several days.

The evening she was allowed upstairs Olwen was sitting in a big chair by the open window watching the girls in the garden below. She turned at the sound of footsteps, and when her eyes met Adeleine's she flushed painfully.

"Oh, Adeleine," she said, with an effort to seem natural. "I thought it was Eve. Can you find a chair? That's quite a comfy one over there."

Adeleine fetched the chair in silence and seated herself by the window with her elbows on the sill and her face cupped in her hands.

"It's rather jolly up here," said Olwen nervously. "You can see a lot of the playing fields through the trees."

Adeleine turned with an impulsive movement. "Olwen, I don't know how to begin."

"Don't then," Olwen smiled. "I know all about everything—Eve came up at once—and it would be much nicer if you didn't say anything."

"But I must say how horribly—*horribly* sorry I am.

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And Miss Travers said you were making yourself ill for fear I'd be expelled."

"Of course! It would have been so dreadful. I'm sure they never could have done that after your owning up as you did. I could never have been so brave."

"Brave!" repeated Adeleine gloomily. "I'm about the meanest thing that ever lived. I dare say you'll hardly believe it, but when I look back it seems like a bad dream—I simply can't think how I *could* have been so mean, and yet at the time I didn't see it at all."

"Oh, please, never mind. Dr. Martin was saying it is a good thing I fainted, because I was making myself ill with straining my eyes; and I've got to have glasses. They won't be ready till next week, and he won't let me go into school till I get them. I was afraid if I said anything about my eyes I'd have my work stopped, and he says this may save me months—so it's all for the best, you see."

"You *are* sporting, Olwen," Adeleine said, with a half-reluctant admiration, and Olwen refused to discuss the subject any more.

The thing that weighed most on her mind was her solo for the Fête. There was only a short time now, and she had had very few practices or special lessons. Everyone else was full of preparations, and Tredennings had given a grand rehearsal of the play before the Head

and Staff and been congratulated warmly. Eve was bubbling over with excitement.

"I do wish you'd been there, old thing," she said, when she slipped upstairs for her daily visit. "Laurel is most frightfully bucked in her funny quiet way, and everybody is awfully keen about it."

"It was your idea," Olwen said delightedly.

Eve nodded. "But you are the only person that has remembered that important fact. You'd think every girl in Tredennings had planned it in her own mind from the very first."

"What a shame!"

"I don't care—not one little bit. It's all for the glory of Tredennings. But I do wish you were in it."

Olwen leant forward impulsively. "I say, Eve, I never meant to tell you, but—I'm going to sing a solo for the Fête."

"You're—*what?*" Eve stared in blank astonishment.

"Yes, I know—you must think I'm really dotty. But I've got rather a nice voice. You needn't laugh!" For Eve, after an astonished gasp, had given a little spurt of laughter.

"I'm so sorry, but what *do* you mean?"

"Just that. I never said a word about it because I didn't want to spend time on practising, but—well, it was dreadful to be the only one not doing anything

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for the Fête—no, it wasn't quite that—not *only* that. I wanted to do it for you."

Eve opened her eyes wide. "For me!"

Olwen blushed and hesitated. "Does it sound soppy? You see, you'd done such a lot for me and I couldn't pay you back in any way—no, I know you don't want me to—and I thought it was rather horrid for you having just the Latimer scholarship girl for a chum, so if I could do anything you'd be proud of—oh, it's so difficult to explain."

"Well, but—it's awfully sporting of you to think like that, but awful rot all the same. Have you asked Miss Woods, or are you just going to jump on a chair and sing on your own?"

"It isn't a joke." Olwen looked rather hurt. "Of course Miss Woods knows, and thinks I can do it. Would you like to hear me now?"

"*Rather!*" Eve nodded, her face a mixture of amusement and mystification.

"Shut the windows and the door then," said Olwen imperatively, and Eve obeyed in a half-dazed fashion.

"Sakes!" she laughed softly, as she pulled down the window. "Do you make such a noise as all that?"

Olwen ignored such ill-timed pleasantries and stood waiting till Eve, with dancing eyes, had settled herself in her chair. Then she began to sing a sweet, mournful

melody in a beautiful, deep contralto voice that made Eve slowly sit up in her chair, and then lean forward with hands clasped tightly on her knee, and all the amusement chased out of her face by an expression of utter amazement. Olwen's dark eyes were gazing out of the high windows at the clouds flying across the blue sky, and only with the last deep notes of her song did she come back to Tredennings.

"There!" she said, sedately walking across to the windows and pushing them up. "Do you think that it will be all right?"

"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Eve. "I never heard anything like it! I mean, of course, from a girl. Clara Butt, and people like that, of course, but——" Eve was absolutely incoherent and Olwen laughed with delight.

"Don't be *quite* an idiot," she scoffed. "Of course I'm absolutely untrained, as Miss Woods says, but I've got a good organ——"

"Organ! I should jolly well say so," interrupted Eve. "I *never* heard a girl with such a voice. My goodness! Has the Head heard you?"

"No, only Miss Woods and you."

"I don't know how you managed to hold it in," said Eve, staring at her curiously. "You know, Olwen, I've always thought there was a sort of mystery about you, as if there was something you were always going

to tell me and then didn't. Now I know what it is."

The colour mounted slowly into Olwen's face, up even to the roots of her dark hair, and her eyes widened with a half-startled expression before she turned them away from Eve's eager gaze to stare at the clouds again.

"I'm awfully glad I know," Eve went on, leaning back in her chair and stretching out her long legs luxuriously. "I think you might have told me before, seeing we're chums."

"I hated having secrets from you," Olwen said in a low tone.

"I should jolly well think so! And since we're on the subject, don't you think it would be top-hole if you could come away with me for the hols—part of them anyway? We'll decide where we'd like to go and tell Pops he's got to take us."

Olwen jerked round with a face of horrified protest. "Gracious to goodness," she exclaimed, falling back on an exclamation of Marget's in her consternation. "I never could do such a thing, whatever, Eve Latimer—no, never."

Eve sat up straight and looked at her indignantly. "Well, I don't think you're very polite," she said coldly. "If you don't want me——"

"Oh, it isn't that, Eve *fach*, indeed, and you know it isn't. It's—I——"

"Then it's Pops. Anyone would think he'd done you an injury by giving you a scholarship. You always—oh, I don't know, but anyhow I don't think you're nice about him." Eve leant back again and kicked the wall under the window with an indignant foot.

"I'm sorry, because I am very grateful," Olwen said slowly, "only I don't think he'll want me."

"*I want you,*" protested Eve. "He's always wanted me to have a girl friend, and Sadie is too far away. Of course Jackie and Josey—Lady Vane asked me there last summer, but they're ~~two~~ and I always feel odd man out—sort of. And this term I *did* think I'd got a real chum of my own."

"Oh, but you have, Eve. I never thought you really *wanted* me, I was afraid it was all just kindness."

It was Eve's turn to flush a little. "I don't know about kindness," she said. "Of course at first—I—well, Shirley said you were Pops' guest and I ought to see you were all right, but afterwards I forgot about that and was awfully glad I'd got you. So come with me for the hols, Olwen. Pops is coming for the Fête and we'll fix it up then. Promise."

"Wait and see what *he* says," Olwen replied, with a little laugh. "Besides, it's all very well, but how can I go and stay with you? You don't know how—funny—my clothes will be when I'm out of uniform."

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“Clothes! Who cares about clothes?”

“You do.”

“Well, Pops——”

“I’m not going to take clothes from Mr. Latimer,” Olwen cried indignantly. “Indeed, what do you think of me?”

Eve waved despairing arms at the ceiling. “Of all the obstinate, irritating, unpractical people—I say, what are you going to wear when you sing at the Fête?” she broke off suddenly.

“My white evening frock. I can’t help it, Eve. If I sent to Marget she’d only send me another just as bad. I know it’s clumsy, but I hope if I sing well people won’t notice my dress.”

Eve groaned.

CHAPTER XVIII

“You are Yourselves Now!”

The next day Olwen was in school again, the self-conscious wearer of a pair of owl-like glasses.

“They don’t improve your beauty,” Molly remarked, surveying her critically.

“I always thought you ought to wear glasses,” Anne said, with an air of wisdom. “You had a sort of dazed look in your eyes.”

“That was the artistic temperament,” shrieked Molly indignantly. “Listen to her then! ‘Dazed’, says she. Little she knows of the artistic feeling!”

“But you re not artistic, are you, Olwen?” appealed Anne. “I know you’re frightfully brainy, but you don’t *do* things like music or painting, do you?”

Eve gave a little spurt of laughter. “Oh, just you wait,” she advised, in spite of Olwen’s pleading glance. “You never know till you see.”

“Awfully glad to see you downstairs again,” said the Seniors, as they met her in Hall, Common Room, and playing fields. And under the warming rays of popu-

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larity Olwen became more natural and happier than ever Lestholme had seen her. It was pleasant after being snubbed and slighted for so long to suddenly come out into this friendly atmosphere. The only fly in her pot of ointment was Adeleine. It was so difficult to be nice without seeming to patronize. How could she, to whom Adeleine had hardly deigned to speak, try to be kind to the girl who was, with a real dignity, accepting her punishment calmly and uncomplainingly? Adeleine had been the first to welcome her back, and after that had simply kept out of the way. Olwen sighed over it, but had the sense to know that she could not force her friendship on her old enemy.

Eve was very absent-minded during these days. The fact of the play hardly seemed sufficient to account for it, and Olwen wondered what could be the reason for her anxiety about the post. Several times she had found her studying the letter-rack and turning away with a frown.

"Isn't your father coming?" Olwen asked once. "Hasn't he written?"

"Oh, he's coming all right," Eve replied impatiently. "It isn't *that*!" She omitted to explain *what* it was. And that from Eve who wanted no secrets!

The morning of the Fête dawned—well, not "fair and clear", but what is much safer in England—

rather dull and misty. But by ten o'clock the clouds had rolled away and the sun was pouring on to the lawns so closely mown the previous day that they looked like sheets of emerald velvet. Jobson surveyed them with gloomy pride, tempered with indignation at their desecration by the men from the city who were putting up the big marquee.

There was to be an early dinner, that all might be cleared away and everyone dressed before the guests began to arrive, and of course, there were no lessons that morning. Everyone, except prefects, who were called upon for help, was banished to the playing fields.

“ I think Olwen's the calmest person here,” Jackie said, as she sat on the grass watching a game of tennis and trying to rub up her longest speech in the play. “ It's funny she's not in anything.”

“ I can't think what's wrong with Eve,” Josey said lazily. “ She looks so worried.”

The game came to an end and Eve sauntered across and flung herself on the ground beside them.

“ Well, for a girl who's going to see her ‘ Pops ’ in a couple of hours, you don't look very joyful,” mocked Josey.

“ Don't try to be funny,” retorted Eve. “ You're going to see your mother, and *you're* not particularly gay.”

"It's this beastly play," said Jackie. "We're so afraid we'll disgrace Mummie. They did things top-hole in her day, and she thinks we're a degenerate race. Anyhow, I haven't got a memory worth mentioning."

"I wish I was in that aeroplane," said Eve, lying on her back and gazing at a machine coming out of the blue distance. "What a long way off you can see them, can't you? But you can hear them farther."

Jackie shaded her eyes from the sun and stared up. "It's going across to Olwen's dear hills of Wales."

"It's coming down," said Olwen, who had joined the group.

"Duffer! Where can it land here?" Jackie demanded.

Eve sat up suddenly, leaning back on her arms and looking at the approaching aeroplane with an eager interest. It was certainly flying low, and the nearer it came the lower it flew, slowly too, as if the pilot was looking for a landing-place.

"What on earth——?" ejaculated Josey.

"Engine trouble," decided Jackie.

All over the fields games had stopped, and the players were bending their necks to breaking-point looking at the plane that was now hovering overhead. Even Jobson and the marquee men; even the Staff

and prefects, and even the Head had stopped activities to watch and wonder.

“I do hope,” said the Head anxiously, “if he’s obliged to come down, he’s got a clear field. Elizabeth, Shirley——” But before the words were out, half a dozen prefects were racing down to the fields.

“Get to the sides of the fields,” yelled Elizabeth from a distance. But there was no need to be alarmed, for the plane was not coming down, though something else was. Before the astonished eyes—and open mouths—of the Lestholme girls, two little objects detached themselves from the plane, and above each of them a tiny parachute opened as they fell, so that they should come down gently and safely. Then from above a voice seemed to send a greeting—or was that imagination?—and the plane began to mount, turned round and made off.

“Oh, Pops!” shrieked Eve, leaping up with a bound, and, in common with half Lestholme, made for those descending packages. She was not the first on the spot, however. Ruth Mason had picked up one parcel and Kathleen the other.

“Miss Olwen—— of Tredennings!” read Ruth in astonishment, as she studied the label on the flat box—a box that had the name of a very famous West-End firm printed on it.

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“Me?” gasped Olwen on the fringe of the crowd.
“It can’t be!”

“Well, there isn’t another Olwen in the school, let alone in Tredennings,” laughed Ruth. “Here, catch it. Your friend doesn’t know your name though, apparently.”

Olwen stretched out her hands in a sort of dream, and someone caught the box from Ruth’s hands and gave it to her.

“The other one is for Miss Eve Latimer,” read out Kathleen enviously. “It’s flowers, I think. What it is to be an American!”

“Hand it over,” cried Eve, all smiles and excitement, and with all trace of worry vanished like the aeroplane. “Come on, Olwen. I say, Shirley, can we go to my cubicle, or Olwen’s? It’s really important.”

Shirley nodded, and glanced at Olwen, who seemed to have caught some of Eve’s worries before their final departure, and was eyeing her parcel with an air of distaste which was really rather funny.

Eve gave a tug at Olwen’s sleeve. “Come on, slow coach,” she laughed gleefully, and looked so excitedly happy that Olwen relaxed some of her gloom and the two raced across to Tredennings, followed by the laughter and ironical cheers of the onlookers.

“We’ll go to my room,” said Eve. “Sakes, wasn’t

that a narrow shave! Just like Pops to think of sending by air. I'd given it up. But you can't beat Wilbur Latimer—that's a regular slogan in the States.”

“ Well, but,” protested Olwen, as they arrived breathless in Eve's cubicle and flung the boxes on the bed, “ what's it got to do with me, Eve?”

Eve darted to a pair of manicure scissors on her dressing-table and hacked away at the strings of Olwen's box. Then she snatched off the lid and threw it to the other end of the room—not far—and carefully turned back the layers of tissue paper till a simple frock of the palest primrose georgette came to light.

“ Oh,” said Olwen, with a gasp of admiration as Eve took the dainty garment out of the case and gently shook it out of its folds.

“ Not so bad!” she said thoughtfully, holding it up with both hands at arm's length and turning it from back to front. “ I like those dinkie little pleats at the side of the skirt, don't you? Put it to you, Moddom. Catch hold, you idiot!”

Olwen obeyed instinctively, and Eve danced away to get a better view.

“ Ripping! Here, give it to me while you get out of those things and try it on. There may be something to alter.”

“ Eve—I'm not going to have it! I suppose you mean

that, don't you? It's most awfully good of you, but I told you I wouldn't take clothes from your father."

"Oh, you make me tired!" Eve cried impatiently. "It isn't Pops, it's me. I told him I'd pay him in the hols if he'd send it on in time for the Fête. I saw a picture in a paper and cut it out. I suppose he didn't get the letter in time, or the people at the shop muddled it. You see they'd not got your name. Hurry up, old thing."

Olwen surrendered with a rueful smile, and slipped out of her jumper and skirt, and stood submissively while Eve slipped the delicate folds over her head.

"There now," Eve said triumphantly, dancing back again. "My *dear*! I'd no idea you were so jolly nice looking. It suits you—it might have been made for Moddom. Will Moddom look at herself in the glass? If Moddom will only——"

"Oh, you idiot!" laughed Olwen in spite of herself, and she turned to the glass obediently. As she caught sight of herself in the mirror Eve tilted to the right angle, her eyes widened and her lips parted and her cheeks flushed to a most becoming pink. She could never have believed that she, Olwen Lloyd-Evans, could look like that—why, she wasn't the same girl as the one who, night after night, wore Mrs. Jones' clumsy "evening dress".

“Well?” Eve asked, after a pause, during which Eve studied Olwen and Olwen studied herself. Olwen gave a deep sigh and turned her eyes from the mirror to her chum’s laughing face.

“I couldn’t refuse it, whoever gave it to me,” she said, half ashamed, half laughing, and wholly triumphant. “As Molly would say, ‘it’s not myself, at all, at all’.”

“I should say you *are* yourself now and never have been before,” Eve returned seriously. “Now your hair is decently shingled and you’ve got on a pretty dress that *fits*, why you’ve got an air with you as if you really were somebody.”

“I think that’s because everyone is nice to me now. I feel as if I belong to Lestholme and I never did before. Oh, Eve, I do hope I shall sing well to-morrow, and you’ll be glad I’m a Tredennings girl and the Latimer scholarship girl and——”

“And my pal!” grinned Eve. “How you do go on about that! You bet I’m going to swank round on the strength of you.”

Olwen glowed. She had been so starved of appreciation that the very hint of it was a feast.

“If you’re not ashamed, anyway,” she said, trying not to be greedy. “And, Eve, I’ve been thinking what a beastly ungracious speech I made, saying I couldn’t

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accept the dress, whoever gave it. Did you *ever*!”

Eve chuckled. “You weren’t gushing, old dear! Never mind, let’s see what’s in *my* parcel—though, of course, I know it’s flowers. Yes, look at them—aren’t they ripping? They’re American Beauties. I say, we’ll take some to the Head, and some to Miss Carstairs, and some to our prefects—that’s that. Here, get out of this dress now and let’s go down; it’s nearly lunch time. I’m glad you’re pleased, and I know Pops will be very bucked with his scholarship girl.”

“Oh!” gasped Olwen blankly. And she shed her primrose robe with alacrity.

CHAPTER XIX

“It’s Olwen of Tredennings!”

It seemed as if all the world came to Lestholme that afternoon. The road from the river up to the tram-lines was lined with motors. Every tram that came up from the city brought a fresh contingent of visitors, and taxis from the various stations went to and fro gaily. The School House was flying its Union Jack, and strings of little flags floated bravely in the breeze. Over the red and white marquee were draped the flags of the various nationalities represented at Lestholme—American, French, Italian, Belgian, Russian, and a Japanese flag in honour of the Japanese consul, who was present and hoped to send his daughter next term.

“I say, Shirley, are you busy? Come and speak to Mummie, will you? She says she’s never seen Lestholme look so lovely, even in *her* day!” Josey Vane chuckled appreciatively. “Monica, won’t you come too? Mummie was asking after you both.”

The two prefects passed on through the crowd to where Lady Vane, looking very little older than in the

days when she herself was a prefect at Tredennings, stood in the centre of a laughing group of girls.

"Any of your friends here, Olwen?" called a passer-by as Olwen stood watching from the river walk.

"No," she shook her head. She felt a bit lonely again, for Eve was eagerly watching the gate for her father, and she had slipped away and was determined to *keep* away as long as she could.

"I say, Olwen, you lazy beggar, come and help," called Elizabeth. "Girls who are not in attendance on their own people come and help with ices and things." The head girl eyed her over as she spoke. "Jolly frock you've got," she said approvingly, as she hurried away.

Across the lawn Olwen caught a glimpse of Miss Travers welcoming a tall keen-faced man who was wearing the peculiar type of horn spectacles that she had learnt to associate with Americans. It did not need the sight of an ecstatic Eve, in the palest of rose-coloured frocks, hanging on his arm, to tell her that here was Mr. Latimer at last.

Eve's eyes were roving questingly round the crowds, and Olwen hurriedly dived between two groups of strangers and gained the shelter of the marquee. She stood for a minute or two trying to collect her thoughts. Who would have thought, three weeks ago—less than

that—that any girl in Lestholme, except of course Eve, would have wanted to introduce Olwen of Tredennings to her people? And yet a few minutes ago Laurel had introduced her to her father, “Brayton Miles, the famous novelist” (*he* had said something quite nice about her verses in the “Rag”); and Lady Vane had held out a friendly hand and said she had heard such a lot about her. And, most astounding of all, Adeleine had introduced her to her grandmother, who was a very great lady and very gracious to the scholarship girl—it was bewildering!

She glanced down at her dainty frock and her long silk-stockinged legs, and smiled with a recollection of the story of the Ugly Duckling. She had been very, very fortunate.

“Olwen! Goodness me, I’ve had such a hunt for you,” said an impatient voice, and Kathleen caught hold of her arm. “What on earth are you hiding away for like this?”

“I’m not hiding! I was coming to help with the ices or something and I just stopped for a minute to look round. What a crowd!”

“Rather! They’ve bought every single thing off the stalls, and when you think what they’ve all paid for tickets, we ought to jolly well rake in a lot. But what I came for is—Miss Woods wants you at once.”

Olwen's heart seemed to jump up and turn over.

"Now?" she asked in a faint voice.

"D'reckly minute!" said Kathleen, eyeing her with curiosity. "What's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing. Where is she?"

"Over there by the orchestra."

Olwen made her way back across the lawn to where Miss Woods was standing, feeling as if she were walking to her execution. She knew she would be all right as soon as she began to sing, but just at present she felt sick with fright. Miss Woods, too, was a trifle nervous. There had been a rehearsal the day before, with the leader of the orchestra as accompanist, and both he and the Head had been astonished at Olwen's voice. But suppose, after all, it was not as wonderful as they thought, or did not carry well out of doors, or suppose the girl was too nervous to do herself justice! But both of them tried to conceal their panic.

"Are you ready, Olwen?" Miss Woods asked, with a brave smile. "Not been eating cakes, I hope?"

"Nothing at all, Miss Woods, and I'm quite ready." Olwen climbed on the platform and smiled wanly at the violinist who was to play the obbligato. Someone rang a bell three times and Olwen, standing on the front of the platform, saw, as in a nightmare, group after group turn in surprise towards the stage.

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She saw Eve clutch her father, who was talking to Mr. West, and say something eagerly, and both men turned towards her. She saw Lestholme girls everywhere stop and stare at her open-mouthed, and turn and ask each other questions which none of them could answer. And then the first chord was struck on the piano, and she resolutely raised her eyes above the waiting crowd and fixed them on the blue hills across the river.

“Pops! Pops!” Eve had cried impulsively, as the bell rang out, tugging at Mr. Latimer’s sleeve. “This is Olwen; she’s going to sing. You *must* listen.”

“What’s that? Oh—sing? I didn’t know the girl sang, too.”

Mr. West looked across the lawn to the stage where a slim, dark-haired girl with dark, tragic eyes stood motionless, waiting for silence.

“Why!” he ejaculated. “I *said* she ought to be musical with a sense of rhythm like that, but Laurel said——”

“But she *doesn’t* sing,” protested Laurel, staring incredulously.

“Oh, *please*, be quiet!” Eve implored. She was as nervous as either Miss Woods or Olwen herself.

But there was no need to ask anyone to be quiet when, a moment later, Olwen’s deep, rich voice rang out across

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Lestholme's famous lawns and echoed from the old grey houses. The first few notes quavered, but then she gained confidence, or rather forgot her audience altogether, and sang as the child Olwen had sung at the Eisteddfod a few years ago, for sheer joy of the beautiful music she made.

When the last notes died away there was a second's dead silence while more than one listener blinked rapidly and swallowed hard, and Olwen, coming back to earth with a little catch of her breath, gave a hasty bow, jumped off the platform and fled to hide behind it.

Then came a storm of applause, not the ordinary polite clapping that fathers and mothers and other relations feel it their duty to give to juvenile efforts. This was frantic applause, with masculine cries of "Bravo ", from all directions.

But perhaps the greatest sensation was among Lestholme girls themselves. Those who were sitting with visitors were protesting in dazed fashion that no one was more astonished than they were.

"But she never *has* sung before," the twins were declaring in reply to their mother's reproaches. "We couldn't tell you, Mummie darling, because we didn't know."

"It's Olwen Lloyd-Evans," was being passed from

group to group of questioning visitors. “Olwen of Tredennings, the first scholarship girl to come to Lestholme.”

An excited gentleman who was very well known in the musical world was eagerly questioning the smiling Head. “But a child—a mere child,” he was heard to be saying. “I never heard such a voice at that age. It will be a crime if it is not properly trained.”

“There, what do you think of your scholarship girl, Pops?” inquired Eve triumphantly, with a little catch in her voice.

Mr. Latimer drew a deep breath. “Wa-al,” he said. (His accent never seemed to grow less American.) “It seems almost too much for any poor girl—brains and a voice like that. She’s sure got her work cut out to handle her team. You’ve got to make me acquainted with your friend, Eve.”

“Sure, Pops darling. I’ll go and drag her here. The poor dear is scared stiff.”

“I say, Eve,” called girl after girl as she threaded her way across the lawn. “Did *you* know Olwen could sing?”

“Of course I did!” Eve answered proudly. “I’ve heard her before. ‘Up Tredennings’ again, isn’t it? I’m looking for her to come and speak to Pops. He’s frightfully bucked!”

Olwen had been captured by the Head, who was standing smiling with her hand on the girl's shoulder. "Yes, Olwen is going to sing again," she was assuring eager inquirers, "but not till we've had a play, written by one of Tredennings girls and played by the Tredennings Players; and there's some folk-dancing by Faraday too. Olwen has not been very well, so we don't want to tire her. What is it, Eve?"

"I wondered if I could have Olwen to take to Pops?"

Miss Travers laughed. "As if poor Olwen had no will of her own! I'll bring her myself. Come along, Olwen."

They found Mr. Latimer under one of the great cedars.

"There, Mr. Latimer," the Head said gaily, "allow me to present to you Olwen Lloyd-Evans, your scholarship girl."

Mr. Latimer gave a little start, and the keen eyes behind the big round glasses looked quickly from Olwen to the Head and back again. Olwen had stiffened and stood looking at him gravely—Eve watching perplexedly, thought—defiantly. It was too bad of Olwen.

"My dear," the American was saying in his drawling voice. "I'm sure pleased to meet you, but I want to be put wise about something first of all. Do I understand that your name is Lloyd-Evans?"

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“Why, yes, Pops, I *told* you,” cried Eve.

“You did not, my dear. You never, that I know, said the surname at all—it was always just Olwen.”

“But didn’t you know who got the scholarship then?” asked Olwen, with a little pucker between her eyebrows.

Mr. Latimer glanced apologetically at the Head. “I’m afraid I did not. I recollect I was very busy at the time and I left it to my secretary to arrange details. I believe, though, he told me just ‘Evans’.”

“Well, does it matter much?” asked Miss Travers a little surprised.

“It may do. Would you mind telling me your mother’s name?” Mr. Latimer asked gently, looking down at Olwen.

“Eleanor Marsh Redburn,” said Olwen quietly.

“Redburn!” cried Eve. “Why, that was Mother’s name.”

“She was my mother’s sister,” said Olwen, looking at her gravely.

“Then you’re my niece,” Mr. Latimer said, putting his hand on her shoulder. “I believe you’re feeling sore with me because you think I ought to have known. How long have *you* known you were related?”

“Oh, I’ve always known about you,” Olwen replied. “And when there were things about you in the papers

Mother would say: 'That's Auntie Clare's husband.' "

" But did you never see the advertisements I put in the papers asking for information about you?"

" No, we didn't see *many* papers. Mother thought it was quite natural you shouldn't be interested in us after Auntie went, and she wouldn't write. I hardly liked taking the scholarship because I thought you *must* know who I was, seeing the name and where I came from."

" And that's why," broke in Eve excitedly, " that's why you were always so stupid about taking things for fear they came from Pops?"

" Why, of course," said Olwen, " I thought Mr. Latimer might be sorry I'd got the scholarship and mightn't like me to be friends with you, as he gave no sign of knowing who I was."

" I always told you Pops wasn't that sort," Eve said indignantly. The Head had discreetly slipped away when the conversation became so intimate and the three were left alone together.

" Why, see here, Olwen," Mr. Latimer said. " I heard your mother was dead and I tried to find her daughter, but I got no answer to my advertisements and I couldn't trace you. I didn't think she'd ever go back to Wales after all that——" he paused thoughtfully. " No, I never thought that. But I gave the

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scholarship in memory of your aunt—you knew?”

“Yes, I knew that,” said Olwen.

“I wanted it to be associated with her birth-place. As soon as I saw you I saw the likeness to your mother and then I remembered, what I had quite forgotten, that her baby was to be called Olwen. That’s the last I heard of any of you.”

“I’m sorry if I was stupid about it,” Olwen said shyly. “I was always grateful about the scholarship and wanted to do you credit, didn’t I, Eve?”

“You were perfectly dotty on the subject,” Eve told her frankly.

“Well now,” said Mr. Latimer. “Isn’t it too bad to have made such mistakes—all of us! My dear, I’m only too proud to acknowledge such a brilliant and independent niece, but I’d have been equally pleased to know her for her mother’s sake alone. There have been big mistakes for years, Olwen, but we’ll have no more. We must have a big talk to-morrow and straighten things out.”

“Then we’re cousins!” cried Eve.

Olwen nodded.

“And you knew all the time—oh, *that’s* what you were always just going to say and didn’t?”

“I wanted to most awfully lots of times, but I didn’t want to take advantage of——”

“Listen to her, Pops!” broke in Eve indignantly. “Did you ever! I could shake you! Well, *now* will you come with me in the hols? You said you would if Pops wanted you?”

“I’d love to,” said Olwen happily.

